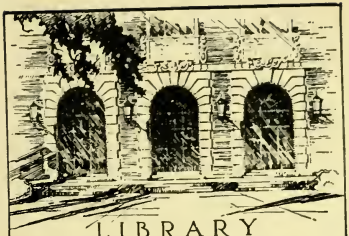

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MILDRED ARKELL.

VOL. II.

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MILDRED ARKELL.

A Novel.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

"EAST LYNNE," "LORD OAKBURN'S DAUGHTERS," "TREVLYN HOLD,"

ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MILDRED ARKELL.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCHOOL-BOY'S LOVE.

A BRILLIANT evening in July. The sun had been blazing all day with intense force, glittering on the white pavement of the streets, scorching the dry and thirsty earth; and it was not until his beams shone from the very verge of the horizon that the gay butterflies of humanity ventured to come forth.

Groups were wending their way to the Bishop's Garden: not the private garden of the respected prelate who reigned over the diocese of Westerbury, but a semi-public garden-promenade called by that name. In the years long gone by, a bishop of Westerbury caused a piece of waste land belonging to the grounds of his palace to be laid out as an ornamental garden. Broad sunny walks for the cold of winter, shady winding ones for the heat of

summer, shrubberies and trees, flower-beds and grass-plots, miniature rocks and a fountain, were severally formed there; and then the bishop threw it open to the public, and it had ever since gone by the name of the Bishop's Garden. Not to the public indiscriminately—only to those of superior degree; the catering for the recreation of the public indiscriminately had not come into fashion then. It had always lain especially under the patronage of the residents of the grounds, and they took care—or the Cerberus of a gatekeeper did for them—that no inferior person should dare venture within yards of it: a tradesman might not so much as put his nose through the iron railings to take a peep in.

The garden was getting full when a college boy—he might be known by his trencher—passed the gate with a slow step. A party had just gone in whose movements his eyes had eagerly followed, but he was not near enough to speak. As he looked after them wistfully, his eye caught something glittering on the ground, and he stooped and picked it up. It was a small locket of gold, bearing the initials "G. B."

He knew to whom it belonged. He would have given half his remaining life, as it seemed, to go in and restore it to its owner. But that might not be; for the college boys, whether king's scholars or private pupils, were rigorously excluded by custom from

the Bishop's Garden. And Williams, the gatekeeper, was stealing up then.

He was tall of his age, looking about sixteen, though he was not quite so much; tall enough to lean over the iron railings, which he did with intense eagerness; and never did woman's face betray more beauty, whether of form or colouring, than did his.

It was Henry Arkell. For the years have gone on, and the lovely boy of ten or eleven, has grown into this handsome youth. Other people and other things have grown with him.

"Now then! What be you doing here? You just please to take yourself off, young gentleman."

He quitted the railings in obedience; the college boys never thought of disputing the orders of the gatekeeper. Stepping backwards with a sort of spring, he stepped upon the foot of some one who was approaching the gate.

"Take care, Arkell."

He turned hastily and raised his trencher. The speaker was the good-natured Bishop of Westerbury; his widowed daughter on his arm.

"I beg your lordship's pardon."

"Too intent to see me, eh! You were gazing into the garden as if you longed to be there."

"I was looking for Miss Beauclerc, sir; I thought she might be coming near the gate. I

have just picked up this, which she must have dropped going in."

"How do you know it is Miss Beauclerc's?" cried the bishop, glancing at the gold locket.

"I know it's hers, sir; and her initials are on it." But Henry turned his face out of sight, as he spoke. And lest any critic should set up a cavil at the bishop being addressed as "sir," it may be as well to mention that it was the custom with the college boys. Very few of them could bring their shy lips to utter any other title.

"Go in and give it to Miss Beauclerc, if it is hers," cried the bishop.

"The gatekeeper will not let me," said Henry, with a smile. "He tells us all that it is as much as his place is worth to admit a college boy."

"They ain't fit for such a place as this, nohow, my lord," spoke up the keeper. "Once let 'em in, and they'd be for playing at hare and hounds over the flower-beds."

"Nonsense!" said the bishop. "I don't see what harm there would be in admitting the seniors. You need not be so over-strict, Williams. Come in with me, Arkell, if you wish to find Miss Beauclerc; and come in whenever you like. Do you hear, Williams, I give this young gentleman the *entrée* of the garden."

The bishop laid his hand on Henry's shoulder,

and they walked in together, all three, his daughter on his other side. Many a surprised eye-glass was lifted; many an indignant eye regarded them.

Never yet had a college boy—St. John always excepted—ventured within the pale of that guarded place. And if the bishop and his daughter had appeared accompanied by a fiery serpent, it could not have caused more inward commotion. But nobody dared betray it: the bishop was the bishop, and not to be interfered with.

"There's Miss Beauclerc, my lad."

And in a few minutes—Henry could not tell how, in his mind's tumultuous confusion—Georgina Beauclerc had turned into a side walk with him, and they were alone. Georgina was the same Georgina as ever—impulsive, wilful, and daringly independent. Everybody paid court to the dean's daughter.

"Did you drop this in coming in, Miss Beauclerc?"

"My locket! Of course I must have dropped it. Harry, I would not have lost it for the world."

His sensitive cheek wore a crimson flush at the words. *He* had given it to her on her last birthday, when she was eighteen. As she took it from him, their fingers touched. That touch thrilled through his veins, while hers were unconscious, or at best heedless of the contact.

It was the not uncommon tale; the tale that has been enacted many times in life, and which Lord Byron has made familiar to us as being his own heart's history—

"The maid was on the eve of womanhood:
The boy had fewer summers; but his heart had far outgrown his years:
And to his sight there was but one fair face on earth,
And that was shining on him."

It has been intimated that Georgina Beauclerc had inherited the dean's innate taste for what is called beauty, both human and statuesque. In the dean it was very marked. This, it may have been, that first drew forth her regard for Henry Arkell. Certain it was, she saw him frequently, and took no pains to disguise her admiration. He was a great favourite of the dean's—was often invited to the deanery. That he was no common boy, in nature, mind, or form, was apparent to the dean, as it was to many others, and Dr. Beauclerc evinced his regard openly. Georgina did the same. At first she had merely liked to patronize the young college boy; rather to domineer over him, looking upon him as a child in comparison with herself. But as they grew older, the difference in their years became less marked, and now they appeared nearly of the same age, for he looked older than he was, and Georgina younger. She was very pretty, with

her large, rich blue eyes, and her small, fair features.

He had grown to love her; to love her with that impassioned love, which, pure and refined though it is, can only bring unhappiness. What did he think could be the ending? Did he reflect that it was utter madness in *him* to love the dean's daughter? It was nothing less than madness; and there were odd moments when the truth, that it was so, rose up in his mind, turning his whole soul to faintness.

And she, Georgina Beauclerc? She liked Henry Arkell very much indeed; she took pleasure in being with him, in talking with him, in *flirting* with him; she was conscious of a degree of pride when the handsome boy walked, as now, by her side; she encouraged his too-evident admiration for her; *but she did not love him.* She loved another too deeply to have any love left for him.

And she was so utterly careless of consequences. Had it been suggested to Miss Beauclerc that she was doing a wrong thing, bordering upon a wicked one, in thus trifling with that school-boy's heart, she would have laughed in very glee, and thought it fun. Though she must have known, if she ever took the trouble to glance forward, that in the years to come, did things continue as they were now, and Henry Arkell told his love to the ear, as

well as to the eye and heart, the explosion must have place, and he would know how he had been deceived. What would her excuse be? that she liked him; that she liked his companionship; that she could not afford to reject his admiration? The gratification of the present moment was paramount with Georgina.

But what was Mrs. Beauclerc about, to suffer this? Mrs. Beauclerc! Had her daughter flirted with the whole forty king's scholars on a string, and the head master's private pupils to boot, she would never have seen it; no, nor understood it if pointed out to her. Her daughter was Miss Beauclerc, a young lady of high degree, and the college boys were inferior young animals with whom it was utterly impossible Georgina could possess anything in common.

"But how did you get in here, Harry?" began Miss Beauclerc, slipping the locket on her chain. "Has crusty old Williams gone to sleep this evening?"

"The bishop brought me in. He has given Williams orders that I am to be admitted here."

"Has he? What a glorious fellow! I'll give him ten kisses for that, as I used to do when I was a little girl. And now, pray, what became of you this afternoon? You said you should be in the cloisters."

"I know. I could not get out. I was doing Greek with my father."

"Doing Greek! It's always that. 'Doing Greek,' or 'doing Latin,' it's nothing else with you everlastingly. What a wretched pedant you'll be, Harry Arkell!"

"Never, I hope. But you know I *must* study; I have only my talents to depend upon for advancement in life; and my father, his heart is set on seeing me a bril— a good scholar."

"You are a brilliant scholar already," grumbled Georgina, bringing out the word which his modesty had left unspoken. "There's no reason why you should be at your books morning, noon, and night. I always said Mr. Peter Arkell was a martinet from the first hour he came to drill literature into me. Which he couldn't accomplish."

"The school meets in a week or two, you know, and——"

"Tiresome young reptiles!" interjected Miss Beauclerc. "We are quieter without them."

"And I must make the best use of my holidays for study," continued Henry. "They wish me to get to Oxford early."

"Goodness me! you might go now, if that's what you mean; you know enough. Harry, I do hope when you are ordained you'll get some high preferment."

"Such luck is not for me, Miss Beauclerc. I may never get beyond a curacy; or at most a minor canonry."

"Nonsense, and double nonsense! With the influential friends you may count even now! You know that everybody makes much of you. I should like to see you dean of this cathedral."

"And you——" Henry stopped in time. A tempting vision had mentally arisen, and for the moment led him out of himself. Did Georgina scent the treason, all but uttered? She resumed volubly, hastily—

"I have a great mind to tell you something; I think I will. But don't you let it go farther, Henry, for it is a secret as yet. There's going to be a school examination."

"No!" exclaimed Henry, some consternation in his tone.

"Why! are you afraid of it?"

"I am not. But I was thinking how very unfit the school is to stand it. What will Mr. Wilberforce say?"

"There's the fun," cried Georgina in glee. "When I heard papa talking of this, I said it would drive the head master's senses upside down. The dean and chapter are going to introduce all sorts of improvements into the school."

"What can have set them on to it!" ex-

claimed Henry, unable to recover his surprise and concern.

"The spelling, I think," said Georgina, pursing up her pretty mouth. "Jocelyn—and he'll be the senior boy this next half, you know—wrote a letter to his aunt; she rents her house and land under old Meddler, and knows the Meddlers—visits them, in fact. What should she do but take the letter to old Meddler, and asked him whether it was not a disgrace to any civilized community. Old Meddler kept the letter and brought it here, when he came into residence last week, and showed it to papa. There were not ten words spelt right in it. Altogether, there's going to be something or other done. But I'm sure you need not look so concerned over it, Henry Arkell; you are safe."

"I am safe. Yes, thanks to my father, I have enjoyed great advantages. But I am thinking of the others."

"Serve them right! They are a lazy set. Papa said, 'I should think Henry Arkell does not write like this!' *I* could have answered that, you know, had I chosen to bring out some of your letters."

There was a pause of silence. The tone had been significant, and his poor heart was beating wildly. "What a lovely rose!" he exclaimed, when the silence had become painful. "I wish I dare pluck it!"

"Dare! Nonsense! Pluck it if you wish."

"I thought it was forbidden to touch the flowers here!"

"So it is," said Georgina, snapping off the rose, one of the variegated species, and a great beauty. "But I do as I please. I would pluck all the flowers in the garden for two pins, just to see the old gardener's dismay."

"What would the visitors say to you?"

"Bow to me, and wish they dare perform such feats. Pshaw! I am the dean's daughter. Here, Harry, I will make you a present of it."

She threw the rose into his hand as she spoke, and she saw what the gift was to him.

"What shall you do with it, Harry?"

"Had I plucked the rose myself, I should have given it to my mother. I shall keep it now—keep it for ever. I may not," he added, lowering his tone, and speaking, as it were, to himself, "part with your gifts."

Georgina laughed lightly, an *encouraging* laugh.

Oh! it was wrong; wrong of her to act so. They reached the end of the shady walk and turned again.

"How long are you going to remain in that precious choir?" resumed Georgina, "wasting your time for the public benefit."

"Mr. St. John put the very same question to me this morning. He——"

"Mr. St. John!" she interrupted, in startling, nay, wild impulse, and her face became one glow of excitement. "But what do you mean?" she added, subsiding into calmness as recollection returned to her. "He is not in Westerbury."

The words, the emotion, told their own tale; and their true meaning flashed upon his brain. It was an era in the unhappy boy's life. How was it that he had been blind all these years?

"You take a strange interest in him, Miss Beauclerc," and there seemed to be no life left in his pale face, as he turned to her with the question.

"For another's sake," she evasively answered. "I told you some time ago Frederick St. John was in love with *her*."

He knew to whom she alluded. "Do you think it *likely* that he is, Miss Beauclerc?"

"If he's not in love with herself, he is in love with her beauty," said Georgina, with a laugh. "But you know what the popular belief is—that the heir of the St. Johns, whatever he may do with his love, may only give his hand to his cousin, Lady Anne."

"I hope it is so. She is the nicest girl, and he deserves a good wife. I used to sing duets with her when she was last at the Palmery."

"Oh!" said Georgina, turning her pretty nose into the air, "and so you fell in love with her."

"No," replied Henry; "my love was not mine to give."

Another pause. Georgina snatched a second flower—a carnation this time—and began pulling it to pieces.

"I suppose you heard from him this morning?"

"Yes."

"And where is he now?"

"In Spain. But he talks of coming home."

He stole a glance at her; at the loving light that shone in her bright blue eyes; at the soft glow, red as the carnation she was despoiling, on her conscious cheek. *Why* did he not read the signs in all their full meaning? Why did hope struggle with the conviction that would have arisen in his heart?

"Have you his letter?"

"Yes; you can read it if you like. There are no secrets. I have told him that Miss Beauclerc was fond of looking at his letters. He is enthusiastic, as usual, on the subject of pictures."

She closed her hand upon the foreign-looking letter which he took from his jacket pocket to give to her. "I will take it home with me, and return it to you to-morrow; I can't read it now. And, Harry, I am going back to my party, or perhaps they'll be setting the crier to work. Mind you don't breathe a word of that school examination: it would not do.

But I tell things to you that I'd not tell to anybody else in the world."

She ran away up a side path, and Henry made his way to the more frequented part of the garden. It happened that he found himself again with the bishop; and the prelate laid his hand, as before, on the shoulder of the handsome boy, and kept him at his side.

Mrs. Peter Arkell had not grown better with years; on the contrary, the weakness in the back was greater, and her health in other ways began to fail. A residence of some weeks at the sea-side was deemed essential for her; absolutely necessary, said her medical attendant, Mr. Lane: and indeed it was not much less necessary for Peter Arkell himself, who was always ill now. His state of health told heavily upon them. He had been obliged to give up a great portion of his teaching; and but for his ever-ready friend and relative, Mr. Arkell, whose hand was always open, and for certain five-pound notes that came sometimes in Mildred's letters, Peter had not the remotest idea how he should have got along. This going to the sea-side would have been quite out of the question, but that they had met with a fortunate chance of letting their house for two months, to a family desirous of coming to Westerbury. Lucy, of course, would go with them; but the question was—what was to be

done with Henry? Travice Arkell, in his impulsive good nature, said he must stop with them, and Mr. Arkell confirmed it. Henry supposed he must, but he felt sure it would not be palatable to Mrs. Arkell.

Travice Arkell was in partnership with his father now. At the time of his leaving school there had been a visible improvement in the prospects of the manufacturers, and Mr. Arkell yielded to his son's wish to join him, and hoped that the good times were coming back again. But the improvement had not lasted long; and Mr. Arkell was wont to say that Travice had cast in his lot with a sinking ship. The designation of the firm had never been altered; it was still "George Arkell and Son." Times fluctuated very much. Just now again there was a slight improvement; and altogether Mr. Arkell was still upon the balance, to give up business or not to give it up, as he had been for so many years.

Henry walked home from the Bishop's Garden, with the strange emotion displayed by Georgina Beauclerc, at the mention of Mr. St. John, telling upon his memory and his heart. Lucy met him at the door, her sweet face radiant.

"Oh, Henry! such news! News in two ways. I don't know which to tell you first. One part concerns you."

"Tell me that first, then," said he, laughing.

"You are not to be at Mr. Arkell's while we are away. You are to be at——guess where."

"I can't guess at all. I don't know anybody who'd have me."

"At the master's."

His eye lightened as he looked up.

"Am I? I am so glad! Is it true, Lucy?"

"It is quite true. Mr. Wilberforce saw mamma at the window, and came in to ask her how she was, and when she went, and all that. Mamma said how puzzled she had been what to do with you, but it was decided now you were to go to Mr. Arkell's. So then the master said he thought you had better go to him, and he should be most happy to invite you there for the time, no matter how long we remained away; and when mamma attempted to say something about the great kindness, he interrupted her, saying you had always been so good a pupil, and given him so little trouble, and did him altogether so much credit, that he should consider the obligation was on his side. So it is quite decided, Harry, and you are to go there."

"That's good news, then. And what's the other, Lucy?"

"Ah! the other concerns me. It is good, too."

"Are you going to be married?"

The question was but spoken in jest, and Henry

wondered to see his sister's face change; but she only shook her head and laughed.

"Eva Prattleton is to accompany us to the sea-side."

"Eva Prattleton!"

"Mr. Prattleton came in just after the master left," resumed Lucy. "He said he had come with a petition: would mamma take charge of Eva to the sea-side, and let her go with us? He had intended—you know we heard of it, Harry—to take his two daughters to Switzerland this summer for a treat; but he begins to fear that Eva will not be equal to the travelling, for she's not strong, and a little thing fatigues her; and he thinks a month or two of quiet at the sea-side would do her more good. So *that's* arranged as well as the other."

"And what will Mary do?"

"Oh, she goes to Switzerland with her papa. He has not given up his journey. The two boys are to stay at home, and George Prattleton's to take care of them."

Henry laughed. The idea of Mr. George Prattleton's taking care of the boys struck him as being something ludicrous.

"But what do you think mamma says?" added Lucy, dropping her voice. "The terms hinted at by Mr. Prattleton for Eva were so liberal, that mamma feels sure he is doing this as much to

make our sojourn there more easy to us, as for Eva's benefit; though she is not well, of course, and never has been since her mother's death; the grief then seemed to take such a hold upon her. How kind to us the Prattletons have always been!"

Henry mentally echoed the words—for they were true ones—all unconscious that a time was quickly approaching when he should have to repay this kindness with something very like ingratitude.

CHAPTER II

THE TOUR OF DAVID DUNDYKE, ESQUIRE.

Perhaps of all the changes time had wrought, in those connected with our history, not one was more remarkable than that in Mr. and Mrs. Dundyke, in regard to their position in the world. They had changed in themselves of course; we all change; and were now middle-aged people of some five-and-forty years: Mr. Dundyke being red and portly; his wife, thin and meek as ever.

Little by little, step by step, had David Dundyke risen in the world. There had come a day when he was made a fourth partner in that famous tea-importing house, with which he had been so long connected. He was now the third partner, and his income was a large one. There had also come a day when he was elected a common councilman (I am not sure but this has been previously mentioned), and now the old longing, the height of his ambition, was really and truly dawning upon him. In the approaching autumn he was to be proposed for

sheriff; and *that*, as we all know, leads in time to the civic chair.

You will readily understand that it was not at all consistent for a partner in a wealthy tea house, and a common councilman rising into note and attending the civic feasts, to remain the tenant of two humble rooms. Mr. Dundyke had made a change long ago. He and his wife, clinging still to apartments, as being less trouble, and also less expense on the whole, had moved into handsome ones; and there they remained for some years. But the prospect of the shrievalty demanded something more; and latterly Mr. Dundyke had taken a handsome villa at Brixton, had furnished it well, and set himself up there with two maid servants and a footman. In some degree his old miserly habits were on him still, and he rarely spent where he could save, or launched into any extravagance unless he had an end in view in doing it; but he had never very much loved money for its own sake alone, only as means to an end.

His great care, now that the glorious end was near, was to blazon forth his importance. He wanted the world (*his* little world) to forget what he had been; to forget the pinching and saving, the poor way of living, the red-herring dinners, and the past in general. He did what he could to blot out the past in the present. He looked out

for correspondents to address him as "esquire;" and he took to wear a ring with a crest upon it.

In this very month of July, when you saw Henry Arkell and the dean's daughter walking in the Bishop's Garden—and a very hot July it was—Mr. Dundyke came to the decision of taking a tour. What first put it into his unfortunate head to do so, his wife never knew; though she asked herself the question afterwards many and many a time. He debated the point with himself, to go or not to go, some little while; balancing the advantages against the drawbacks. On the one hand, it would cost time and money; on the other, it would certainly be another stepping-stone in his advancing greatness, the more especially if he could get the *Post* or some other fashionable organ to announce the departure of "David Dundyke, Esquire, and Lady, on a Continental tour."

One sultry afternoon, when Mrs. Dundyke was sewing in her own sitting-room, he returned home somewhat earlier than usual.

"My mind is made up, Mrs. Dundyke," he said, before he had had time to look round, as he came in, wiping his hot brows. "I told you I thought I should go that tour; and I mean to start as soon as we have fixed upon our route. It must be somewhere foreign."

Mr. Dundyke's intellectual improvement had not

advanced in an equal ratio with his fortunes; he called tour tower, and route rout. Indeed, he spoke almost exactly as he used to speak.

"Foreign!" echoed Mrs. Dundyke, somewhat aghast. Her geographical knowledge had always been imperfect and confused; the retired life she led, occupied solely in domestic affairs, had not tended to enlarge it; and the word "foreign" suggested to her mind extremely remote parts of the globe—the two poles and Cape Horn. "Foreign?"

"One can't travel anywhere now that's not foreign, Betsey," returned Mr. Dundyke, testily. "One can't humdrum up and down England in a stage-coach, as one used to do."

"True; but you said foreign. You don't mean America—or China—or any of those parts, do you, David?"

"It's never of no use talking to you about anything, Mrs. D.," said the common-councilman, in wrath. "Chinar! Why, it would be a life-journey! I shall go to Geneva."

"But, David, is not that very far?" she asked. "Where is it? Over in Greece, or Turkey, or some of those places."

"It is in Switzerland, Mrs. D. The tip-top quality go to it, and I mean to go. It will cost a good deal, I know; but I can stand that."

"And how shall we manage to talk Swiss?"

"There is no Swiss," answered Mr. Dundyke. "The language spoke there is French; the guide-book says so."

"It will be the same to us, David," she mildly said; "we cannot speak French."

"I know that 'we' means 'yes,' and 'no' means 'no.' We shall rub on well enough with that. So get all my stockings and shirts seen to, Betsey, and your own things; for the day after to-morrow I shall be off."

His wife looked up, not believing in the haste. But it proved true, nevertheless; for Mr. Dundyke had a motive in it. On the morning but one after, an excursion opposition steamer was advertised to start for Boulogne—fares, half-a-crown; return-tickets, four shillings. Of course David Dundyke could not let so favourable an opportunity slip; he still saved where he could.

Accordingly, on the said morning, which was very squally, they found themselves on the crowded boat. Such a sight! such a motley freight! Half London, as it seemed, had been attracted by the cheapness; but it was by no means a fashionable assemblage, nor yet a refined one.

"I hear somebody saying we shall have it rough, David," whispered Mrs. Dundyke, as they

sat side by side, and the vessel passed Greenwich. "I hope we shall not be sea-sick."

"Pooh! sea-sick! we shan't be sea-sick!" imperiously cried the sheriff in prospective, as he turned his ring, now assumed for good, to the front of all beholders. "I don't believe in sea-sickness for my part. We did not feel sick when we went to Gravesend; you remember that, don't you, Betsey? It is more brag than anything else with people, talking about sea-sickness, that's my belief; a genteel way of letting out that they can afford to be travellers."

Excepting that one trip to Gravesend, of which he spoke, neither he nor his wife had ever been on the water in their lives. Neither of them had seen the sea. They had possessed really no inclination to stir from home; and *saving* had been the ruling motive in David Dundyke's life.

The steamer went on. The river itself growing rough at Gravesend, the dead-lights were put in; and as they got nearer to the sea, the wind was freshening to a gale. Oh, the good steamer! will she ever live through it? The unbelieving common-councilman, to his horror and dismay, found sea-sickness was not a *brag*. He lay on the floor of the cabin, groaning, and moaning, and bewailing his ill fate in having come to sea.

"Heaven forgive me for having thought of this

foreign tour! Steward! He stops up with them outsiders on deck! Heavens! Steward! Call him, somebody! Tell him it's for a common-councilman!"

Mrs. Dundyke was in the ladies' cabin—very ill, but very quiet. A dandy-looking man, impervious to the miseries of the passage, who had nothing to do but gape and yawn, took a sudden look in, by way of gratifying his curiosity, and, having done so, withdrew again—not, however, before one of the lady passengers had marked him. She took him for the captain.

"Capting! capting!" she called out; "if you please is that the capting?"

"Which?—where?" asked the steward's boy, to whom the question was addressed, turning round with a glass of brandy-and-water in his hand, which he was presenting to another lady, groaning up aloft in a berth.

"He came in at the door; he have got on tan kid gloves and shiny boots."

"*That* the captain!" cried the boy, gratified beyond everything at the lady's notion of a captain's rigging. "No, ma'am, he's up on deck."

"Just call the captain here, will you?" resumed the lady; "I know we are going down. I'm never ill aboard these horrid boats; but I'm worse, I'm dreadful timid."

"There ain't no danger, ma'am," said the boy.

"I know there *is* danger, and I know we are a going to be emerged to the bottom. If you'll call the capting down here, boy, I'll give you sixpence; and if you don't call him, I'll have you punished for insolence."

"Call him directly, ma'am," said the boy, rushing off with alacrity.

"I am the captain," exclaimed a rough voice, proceeding from a rough head, poking itself down the companion ladder; "what's wanted of me?"

"Oh! capting, we are going to the fishes fast! and some of us is dead of fright already. The vessel 'll be in pieces presently! see how she rolls and pitches! and there's the sea dashing over the decks and against them boards at the windows, such as I never heard it; and all that awful crashing and cording, what is it?"

"There ain't no danger," shortly answered the commander, mentally vowing to punch the boy's head for calling him for nothing.

"Can't you put back, and land us somewhere, or take us into smooth water?" implored the petitioner; "we'd subscribe for a reward for you, capting, sir."

"Oh, yes, yes," echoed a faint chorus of voices; "any reward."

"There's no danger whatever, I tell ye, ladies,"

repeated the exasperated captain. "When we've got round this bit of headland, we shall have the wind at our starn, and go ahead as if the dickens druv us."

With this consolatory information, the rough head turned round and vanished. The grinning boy came out of a corner where he had hid himself, and appealed to the lady for his promised sixpence.

"I know we are going down!" she cried, as she fumbled in her bag for one. "That capting ought to lose his place for saying there's no danger; to me it's apparent to be seen. If he'd any humanity in him, he'd put back and land us somewhere, if 'twas only on the naked shore. Good mercy! what a lurch!—and now we're going to t'other side. No danger indeed! And all my valuable luggage aboard: my silk gownds, and my shawls, and my new lace mantle! Good gracious, ma'am, don't pitch out of your berth! you'll fall atop of me. Can't you hold on? What were hands made for?"

Some hours more yet, and then the steward, who had been whisking and whirling like one possessed, now on deck, now in the cabins, and now in his own especial sanctum, amid his tin jugs and his broken crockery, came whirling in once more to the large cabin, and said they were at the mouth of Boulogne harbour. "Just one pitch more, ladies and gentlemen—there it is—and now we are in the port, safe and sound."

"Don't talk to me about being in," cried poor Mr. Dundyke, from his place on the floor, not quite sure yet whether he was dead or alive, but rather believing he'd prefer to be the former. "Please don't step upon me, anybody. I couldn't stir yet."

All minor disasters of the journey overcome, the travellers reached Paris in safety. So far, Mr. Dundyke had found no occasion to rub on with his "we" and "no," for he encountered very few people who were not able to speak, or at least understand, a little English. But when they quitted Paris—and they remained in it but two days—then their difficulties commenced; and many were the distresses, and furious the fits of anger, of the common-councilman. It pleased Mr. Dundyke to travel by diligence on cross-country roads, rather than take the rail to Lyons—of which rail, and of all rails, he had a sort of superstitious dread—but this he found easy to do, though it caused him to be somewhat longer on the road. Here his tongue was at fault. He wanted to know the names of the towns and villages they passed through, the meaning of any puzzling object of wonder he saw on his way, and he could not ask; or, rather, he did ask repeatedly, but the answers conveyed to his ears only an unmeaning sound. It vexed him excessively.

"I don't think they understand you, David," Mrs. Dundyke said to him one day.

"And how should they understand, speaking nothing but heathen gibberish?" he returned. "It's enough to make a saint swear."

Another source of annoyance was the living. Those who have travelled by diligence in the more remote parts of France, and sat down to the tables-d'hôte at the road-side inns where the diligence halted, and remember the scrambling haste observed, may imagine the distresses of Mr. and Mrs. Dundyke. In common with their countrymen in general, they partook strongly of the national horror of frog-eating, and also of the national conviction that that delicate animal furnished the component parts of at least every second dish served up in France: so that it was little short of martyrdom to be planted down to a dinner, where half the dishes, for all the information they gave to the eye, might be composed of frogs, or something equally obnoxious. There would be the bouilli first, but Mr. Dundyke, try as he would, could not swallow it, although he had once dined on red-herrings; and there would be a couple of skinny chickens, drying on a dish of watercress, but before *he* could hope, in his English deliberation, to get at them, they were snapped up and devoured. Few men liked good living better than David Dundyke,

—how else would he have been fit to become one of the renowned metropolitan body-corporate?—and when it was to be had at anybody else's cost, none enjoyed it more. At these tables-d'hôte, eat or not eat, he had to pay, and bitter and frequent were the heartburnings at throwing away his good money, yet rising up with an empty stomach. Not a tenth part of the cravings of hunger did he and his wife ever satisfy at these miserable tables-d'hôte. The very idea of but the minutest portion of a frog's leg going into their mouths, was more repulsive to their minds than that shuddering reminiscence of the steam-packet; and, what with this dread, and their inability to ask questions, Mr. and Mrs. Dundyke were nearly starved.

One day in particular it was very sad. They had halted at an inn in a good-sized town, not very far distant from Lyons. While the soup and bouilli were being devoured, the two unfortunates eat a stray radish or two, when up bustled the waiter with a funny-looking dish, its contents wonderfully like what a roast-beef eater might suppose cooked frogs to be, and presented it to Mr. Dundyke.

"What's this?" inquired Mr. Dundyke, delicately adventuring the tip of a fork towards the suspicious-looking compound, by way of indicating the nature of his question.

"Plait-il, monsieur?"

"This, *this*," rapping the edge of the dish with the fork; "what is it made of? what do you call it?"

"Une fricassée de petits pigeons, à l'oseille, monsieur," replied the discerning waiter.

Poor Mr. Dundyke pushed the dish away from him with a groan. Une fricassée de petits pigeons, à l'oseille" in French, might be "Stewed frogs" in English.

"What was all that green mess in the dish?" asked his wife.

"The saints know," groaned the common-councilman. "Perhaps it's the fashion here to cook frogs in their own rushes."

Up came the waiter with another dish, that attentive functionary observing that the Monsieur Anglais eat nothing. A solid piece of meat, with little white ends sticking out of it, rising out of another bed of green. "Oseille" is much favoured in these parts of France.

"Whatever's this?" ejaculated the common-councilman, eyeing the dish with wondering suspicion. "It's as much like a porkipine as anything I ever saw. What d'ye call it?" rapping the edge of the dish as before.

"Foie-de-veau lardé, à l'oseille, monsieur."

The common-councilman was as wise as before, and sat staring at it.

"It can't be frogs, David, this can't," suggested Mrs. Dundyke, "it is too large and solid; and I don't think it's any foreign animal. It looks to me like veal. Veal, waiter?" she asked, appealingly.

"Oui, madame," was the answer, at a venture.

"And the green stuff round it is spinach, of course. Veal and spinach, my dear."

"That's good, that is, veal and spinach. I'll try it," said Mr. Dundyke.

He helped himself plentifully, and, pushing the dish to his wife, voraciously took the first mouthful, for he was fearfully hungry.

It was a rash proceeding. What in the world had he got hold of! Veal and spinach!—Heaven protect him from poison! It was some horrible, soft compound, sharp and sour; it turned him sick at once, and set his teeth on edge. He became very pale, and called faintly for the waiter.

But the garçon had long ago whisked off to other parts of the room, and there was Mr. Dundyke obliged to sit with that nauseous mystery underneath his very nose.

"Waiter!" he roared out at length, with all the outraged dignity of a common-councilman, "I say, waiter! For the love of goodness take this away: it's only fit for pigs. There's a dish there, with two little ducks upon it, and some carrots round 'em—French ducks I suppose they are: an English-

man might shut up shop if *he* placed such on his table. Bring it here."

"Plait-il, monsieur?"

"Them ducks—there—at the top, by the pickled cowcumbers. I'll take one."

The waiter ranged his perplexed eyes round and round the table. "Pardon, monsieur, plait-il?"

"I think you are an idiot, I do!" roared out Mr. Dundyke, unable to keep both his hunger and his temper. "That dish of ducks, I said, and it is being seized upon! They are tearing them to pieces! they are gone! Good Heavens! are we to famish like this?"

The waiter, in despair, laid hold of a slice of melon in one hand and the salt and pepper in the other, and presented them.

"The man *is* an idiot!" decided the exasperated Englishman. "What does he mean by offering me melon for dinner, and salt and pepper to season it? —that's like their putting sugar to their peas! I want something that I can eat," he cried, piteously.

"Qu'est-ce que c'est que je peux vous offrir, monsieur?" asked the agonized garçon.

"Don't you see we want something to eat," retorted the gentleman; "this lady and myself? We can't touch any of the trash on the table. Get us some mutton chops cooked."

"Pardon, monsieur, plait-il?"

"Some—mut—ton—chops," repeated the common-councilman, very deliberately, thinking that the slower he spoke, the better he should be understood. "And let 'em look sharp about it."

The waiter sighed and shrugged, and, after pushing the bread and butter and young onions within reach, moved away, giving up the matter as a hopeless job.

"Let's peg away at this till the chops come," cried Mr. Dundyke. And in the fallacious hope that the chops *were* coming, did the unconscious couple "peg" away till the driver clacked his long whip, and summoned his passengers to resume their seats in the diligence.

"I have had nothing to eat," screamed Mr. Dundyke. "They are doing me some mutton chops. I can't go yet."

"Deux diners, quatre francs, une bouteille de vin, trente sous," said the waiter in Mr. Dundyke's ear. "Fait cinq francs, cinquante, monsieur."

"Fetch my mutton chops," he implored; "we can't go without them: we can eat them in the diligence."

"Allons! dépêchons-nous, messieurs et dames," interrupted the conductor, looking in, impatiently. "Prenez vos places. Nous sommes en retard."

"They are swindlers, every soul of them, in this

country," raved the common-councilman, passionately throwing down the money, when he could be made to comprehend its amount, and that there were no chops to come. "How dare you be so dishonest as charge for dinners we don't eat."

"I am faint now for the want of something," bewailed poor Mrs. Dundyke.

"If ever I am caught out of Old England again," he sobbed, climbing to his place in the diligence, "I'll give 'em leave to make a Frenchman of me, that's all."

CHAPTER III.

A MEETING AT GRENOBLE.

THEY arrived at Lyons; but here Mr. Dundyke's total ignorance of the language led him into innumerable misapprehensions and mishaps, not the least of which was his going from Lyons to Grenoble, thinking all the time that he was on the shortest and most direct road to Switzerland. This was in consequence of his rubbing on with "we" and "no." They had arrived at Lyons late in the evening, and after a night's rest, Mr. Dundyke found his way to the coach-office, to take places on to Switzerland. There happened to be standing before the office door a huge diligence, with the word "Grenoble" painted on it.

"I want to engage a place in a diligence; two places; direct for Switzerland," began Mr. Dundyke; "in a diligence like that," pointing to the great machine.

"You spoke French, von littel, sare?" asked the clerk, who could himself speak a very little imperfect English.

"We," cried Mr. Dundyke, eagerly, not choosing to betray his ignorance.

Accordingly, the official proceeded to jabber on in French, and Mr. Dundyke answered at intervals of hazard "we" and "no."

"Vous désirez aller à Grenoble, n'est-ce pas, monsieur?" remarked the clerk.

"We," cried out Mr. Dundyke at random.

"Combien de places, monsieur?"

"We," repeated the gentleman again.

"I do demande of the monsieur how few of place?" said the official, suspecting his French was not understood quite so well as it might be.

"Two places for Switzerland," answered Mr. Dundyke. "I'm going on to Geneva, in a diligence like that."

"C'est ça. The monsieur desire to go to Grenhaub; et encore jusqu'à Genève—on to Geneva."

"We," rapturously responded the common-councilman.

"I do comprends. Two place in the Gren-haub diligence. Vill the monsieur go by dat von?" pointing to the one at the door. "She do go in de half hour."

"Not that one," retorted Mr. Dundyke, impatient at the clerk's obscure English. "I said in one like that, later."

"Yes, sare, I comprends now. You would

partir by anoder von like her, the next one that parts. Vill you dat I retienne two place for Gren-haub ?"

"We, we," responded Mr. Dundyke. "Two places. My wife's with me, Mrs. D.: I'm a common-councilman, sir, at home. Two places for Gren-haub. Corner ones, mind: in the interior."

"C'est bien, monsieur. She goes à six of de hours."

"She! Who ?"

"The diligence, I do say."

"Oh," said the common-councilman to himself, "they call coaches 'she's' in this country. I wonder what they call women. Six hours you say we shall take going."

"Oui, monsieur," answered the clerk, without quite understanding the question, "il faut venir à six heures."

"And when does it start ?"

"What you ask, sare ?"

"*She*—the diligence—at what o'clock does it start for Gren-haub ?"

"I do tell de sare at de six of de hours dis evening."

"We'll be here a quarter afore it then: never was late for anything in my life. Gren-haub's a little place, I suppose, sir, as it's not in my guide-book ?"

"Comme ça," said the clerk, shrugging his shoulders. "She's not von Lyon."

"Who's she?" exclaimed the bewildered Mr. Dundyke; "who's not a lion?"

"Gren-haub, sare. I thought you did ask about her."

"The asses that these French make of themselves when they attempt to converse in English!" ejaculated the common-councilman. "Who's to understand him?"

He turned away, and went back to the hotel in glee, dreadfully unconscious that he had booked himself for Grenoble, and imagining that Grenhaub (as the word Grenoble in the Frenchman's mouth sounded to his English ears) must be the first town on the Swiss frontiers. "It's an awkward hour, though, to get in at," he deliberated: "six hours, that fellow said we should be, going: that will make it twelve at night when we get to the place. Things are absurdly managed in this country." This was another mistake of his: the anticipated six hours necessary, as he fancied, to convey him from Lyons to "Gren-haub," would prove at least sixteen.

At the appointed hour Mr. and Mrs. Dundyke took their seats in the diligence, which began its journey and went merrily on; at least as merrily as French diligence, of the average weight and size,

can be expected to go. Mr. Dundyke was merry, too, for him; for he had fortified himself with a famous dinner before starting: none of your frogs and rushes and "oseille," but rosbif saignant, and pommes de terre au naturel, specially ordered. Both the travellers had done it ample justice, and seasoned it with some hot brandy-and-water; Mr. Dundyke taking two glasses and making his wife take one. Therefore it was not surprising that both should sink, about nine o'clock, into a sound sleep. They had that compartment of the coach, called the intérieur, to themselves, and could recline almost at full length; and so comfortable were they, that all the various changing of horses and clackings of the whip failed to arouse them.

Not until six o'clock in the morning did Mr. Dundyke open his eyes, and then only partially. He was in the midst of the most delicious dream—riding in that coveted coach, all gilt and gingerbread, on a certain 9th of November to come, moving in stately dignity through Cheapside, amidst the plaudits of little boys, the crowding of windows, and the arduous exertions of policemen to preserve order in the admiring mob; sitting with the mace and sword-bearer beside him, *his* mace and sword-bearer! Mr. Dundyke had been pleased that his sleep, with such a dream, had lasted for ever, and he unwillingly aroused himself to reality.

It was broad daylight; the sun was shining with all the glorious beauty of a summer morning, shining right into the diligence, and roasting the face of the common-councilman. He rubbed his eyes and wondered where he was. Recollection began to whisper that when he had gone to sleep the previous evening it was dusk, and that ere that dusk had well subsided into the darkness of midnight he had expected to be at his destination, "Gren-haub;" whereas—was he asleep still, and dreaming it?—or was it really morning, and he still in the diligence?—or had some unexampled phenomenon of nature caused the sun to shine out at midnight? WHAT was it? In the greatest perturbation he tore his watch from his pocket, and found it was five minutes past six; but he knew that he was rather slower than French time.

A fine hubbub ensued. Mr. Dundyke startled his wife up in such a fright, that he nearly sent her into fits: he roared out to the coachman, he called for the conductor: he shook the doors, he knocked at the windows: he caused the utmost consternation amongst the quiet passengers in the rotonde and banquette, and woke up a deaf old gentleman in the coupé, who all thought he had gone suddenly mad. The diligence was stopped in haste, and out of the door rushed Mr. Dundyke.

"Where were they taking him to? Why had

they not left him at Gren-haub ? Did they know he was a common-councilman of the great city of London, a brother of the Lord Mayor and aldermen ? How dared they run away with him and his wife in that style ? *Where* were they carrying him to ? Were they going to smuggle him off to Turkey or any of them heathen places to sell him for a slave ? They must turn round forthwith, and drive him back to Gren-haub."

All this, and a great deal more of it, delivered in the English tongue and interspersed with not a few English expletives, was as Greek to the astonished lookers-on; and when they had sufficiently exercised their curiosity and stared at the enraged speaker, standing there without his hat, stamping his feet in the dust, and gesticulating more like a Frenchman than a stout specimen of John Bull, they all let loose their tongues together, in a jargon equally incomprehensible to the distressed Englishman. In vain did Mr. Dundyke urge their return to "Gren-haub," now with angry fury, now with tears, now with promises of reward ; in vain the other side demanded to know what was the matter, and tried to coax him into the diligence. Not a word could one party understand of the other.

"Montez, monsieur; montez, mon pauvre monsieur. Dieu ! qu'est-ce qu'il a ? Montez, donc !"

Not a bit of it. Mr. Dundyke would not have

mounted till now, save by main force. It took the conductor and three passengers to push and condole him in; and indeed they never would have accomplished it, but for the sudden dread that flashed over his mind of what would become of him if he were left there in the road, hatless, hopeless, and Frenchless, while his wife and his luggage and the diligence went on to unknown regions. Some of those passengers, if you could come across them now, would give you a dolorous history of the pauvre monsieur Anglais who went raving mad one summer's morning in the diligence.

There was little haste or punctuality in those old days of French posting—driver, conductor, passengers, and horses all liking to take their own leisure; and it was not far off twelve o'clock at noon, six hours after the morning's incomprehensible scene, and eighteen from the time of departure from Lyons, that the lazy old diligence reached its destination, and Mr. Dundyke discovered that he was in Grenoble. How he would ever have found his way out of it, and on the road to Switzerland, must be a question, had not an Englishman, a young man, apparently in delicate health, who was sojourning in the town, fortunately chanced to be in the diligence yard, and heard Mr. Dundyke's fruitless exclamations and appeals, as he alighted.

"Can I do anything for you?" asked the stranger, stepping forward. "I perceive we are countrymen."

Overjoyed at hearing once more his own language, the unhappy traveller seized the English man's hand with a rush of delight, and explained the prolonged torture he had gone through, and the doubt and dilemma he was still in—at least as well as he could explain what was to him still a mystery. "The savages cannot understand me," he concluded politely, "and of course I cannot be expected to understand them."

Neither could the stranger understand just at first; but with the conductor's tale on one side and Mr. Dundyke's on the other, he made out the difficulty, and set things straight for him, and went with him to the diligence office. No coach started for Chambéry, by which route they must now proceed, till the next morning at nine, so the stranger took two places for them in that.

"I'm under eternal obligations to you, sir," exclaimed the relieved traveller, "and if ever I should have it in my power to repay you, be sure you count on me. It's a common-councilman, sir, that you have assisted; that's what I am at home, and I'm going on to be Lord Mayor. You shall have a card for my inauguration dinner, sir, if you are within fifty miles of me. You will tell me your name, and where you live?"

"My name is Robert Carr," said the stranger. "I am a clergyman. I am from Holland."

The name struck on a chord of Mrs. Dundyke's memory. It took her back to the time when she was Betsey Travice, and on a certain visit at Westerbury. Though not in the habit of putting herself forward when in her husband's company, she turned impulsively to the stranger now.

"Have you relations at Westerbury, sir? Was your mother's name Hughes?"

"Yes," he said, looking very much surprised. "Both my father and mother were from Westerbury. I have a grandfather, I believe, living there still. My mother is dead."

"How very strange!" she exclaimed. "Can you come in this evening to us at the hotel for half-an-hour?"

"I would, with pleasure, but I leave Grenoble this afternoon," was the young clergyman's answer. "Can I do anything for you in London?"

"Nothing," said Mrs. Dundyke. "But my husband has given you our address; and if you will call and see us when we get home——"

"And you'll meet with a hearty welcome, sir," interrupted the common-councilman, shaking his hand heartily. "I'm more indebted to you this day than I care to speak."

Mrs. Dundyke watched him out of the yard. He

might be about four-and-twenty; and was of middle height and slightly made, and he walked away coughing, with his hand upon his chest.

"David," she said to her husband, "I do think he must be a relative of yours! The Hughes's of Westerbury were related in some way to your mother."

"I'm sure I don't know," said David Dundyke. "I think I have heard her talk about them, but I am not sure. Any way I'm obliged to *him;* and mind, Betsey, if he does come to see us in London, I'll give him a right good dinner."

Ah, how little! how little do we foresee even a week or two before us! Never in this world would those two meet again.

And Mr. and Mrs. Dundyke proceeded under convoy to the Hôtel des Trois Dauphins, and made themselves as comfortable for the night as circumstances and the stinging gnats permitted.

Arriving at Geneva without further let or hindrance, David Dundyke, Esquire, and his wife, put up at the Hôtel des Bergues. And on the morning afterwards, when Mrs. Dundyke had dressed herself and looked about her, she felt like a fish out of water. The size of the hotel, the style pervading it, the inmates she caught chance glimpses of in the corridors, were all so different from anything poor humble Betsey Dundyke had been

brought into contact with, that she began to feel her inferiority. And yet she looked like a lady, in her good and neat dress, and her simple cap half covering her fair and still luxuriant hair. Her face was red, tanned with the journey; but it was a pleasing and a nice face yet to look upon.

They descended to the great *salle* a little before ten. Many groups were breakfasting there at the long tables; most of them English, as might be heard by their snatches of quiet conversation. Some of them possessed an air of distinction and refinement that bespoke their standing in society. An English servant came in once and accosted his master as "my lord;" and a plain little body in a black silk gown and white net cap, was once spoken to as "Lady Jane." Mr. Dundyke had never, to the best of his knowledge, been in a room with a lord before; had never but once set eyes on a Lady Jane; and that was King Henry the Eighth's wife in waxwork; and, alive to his own importance though the common-councilman was, he felt unpleasantly out of place amidst them. In spite of his ambition his nature was a modest one.

Scarcely had he and his wife begun breakfast, when a lady and gentleman came in and took the seats next to him. The stranger was a tall, dark, rather handsome man; taller than Mr. Dundyke, who was by no means undersized, and approaching

within three or four years to the same age. But while the common councilman was beginning to get rather round and puffy, just as an embryo alderman is expected to be, the stranger's form was remarkable for wiry strength and muscle: in a tussle for life or death, mark you, reader, the one would be a very child in the handling of the other.

Mr. Dundyke moved his chair a little to give more room, as they sat down, and the gentleman acknowledged it with a slight bow of courtesy. He spoke soon after.

"If you are not using that newspaper, sir," pointing to one that lay near Mr. Dundyke, "may I trouble you for it?"

"No use to me, sir," said the common-councilman, passing the journal. "I understand French pretty well when it's spoke, but am scarcely scholar enough in the language to read it."

"Ah, indeed," replied the stranger. "This, however, is German," he continued, as he opened the paper.

"Oh—well—they look sufficiently alike in print," observed the common-councilman. "Slap-up hotel, this seems, sir."

"Comfortable," returned the stranger, carelessly. "You are a recent arrival, I think."

"Got here last night, sir, by the diligence. We are travelling on pleasure; taking a holiday."

"There's nothing like an occasional holiday, a temporary relaxation from the cares of business," remarked the stranger, scanning covertly Mr. Dundyke. "As I often say."

"I am delighted to hear you say it, sir," exclaimed the common-councilman, hastily assuming a fact, from the words, which probably the speaker never thought to convey. "I am in business myself, sir, and this is the first holiday from it I have ever took: I gather that you are the same. Nothing so respectable as commercial pursuits: a London merchant, sir, stands as a prince of the world."

"Respectable and satisfactory both," joined in the stranger. "What branch of commerce—if you don't deem me impertinent—may you happen to pursue?"

"I'm a partner in a wholesale tea-house, sir," cried Mr. Dundyke, flourishing his hand and his ring for the stranger's benefit. "Our establishment is one of the oldest and wealthiest in Fenchurch-street; known all over the world, sir, and across the seas from here to Chinar. And as respected as it is known."

"Sir, allow me to shake hands with you," exclaimed the stranger, warmly. "To be a member of such a house does you honour."

"And I am a common-councilman," continued

Mr. Dundyke, his revelations increasing with his satisfaction, "rising on fast to be a alderman and Lord Mayor. No paltry dignity that, sir, to be chief magistrate of the city of London, and ride to court in a gold and scarlet dress, and broidered ruffles! I suspect we have got some lords round about us here," dropping his voice to a still lower key, "but I'm blest, sir, if I'd change my prospects with any of them. I'm to be put up for sheriff in October."

"Ah," said the stranger, casting his deep black eyes around, "young scions with more debts than brains, long pedigrees and short purses, dealers in post obits and the like—*they* can't be put in comparison with a Lord Mayor of London."

"And what line are you in, sir?" resumed the gratified Lord Mayor in prospective. "From our great city, of course?"

The stranger nodded, but, before he answered, he finished his second *cotelette*, poured out some wine —for his breakfast disdained the more effeminate luxuries of tea and coffee—popped a piece of ice in, and drank it. "Have you heard of the house of Hardcastle and Co.?" he asked, in a tone meant only for Mr. Dundyke's ear.

"The East India merchants?" exclaimed the latter.

The stranger nodded again.

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"Of course I have heard of them: who has not? A firm of incalculable influence, sir; could buy up half London. What of them?"

"Do you know the partners personally?"

"Never saw any of them in my life," replied Mr. Dundyke. "They are top-sawyers, they are; a move or two above us city tea-folks. Perhaps you have the honour of being a clerk in the house, sir?"

"I am Mr. Hardcastle," observed the stranger, smiling.

"Bless my soul, sir!" cried the startled Mr. Dundyke. "I'm sure I beg pardon for my familiarity. But stop—eh—I thought——"

"Thought what?" asked the stranger, for Mr. Dundyke came to a pause.

"That Mr. Hardcastle was an old man. In fact, the impression on my mind was, that he was something like seventy."

"Pooh, my dear sir! your thoughts are running on my uncle. He has been virtually out of the firm these ten years, though his name is still retained as its head. He is just seventy. A hale, hearty man he is too, and trots about the grounds of his mansion at Kensington as briskly as one of his own gardeners. But not a word here of who I am," continued the gentleman, pointing slightly round the room: "I am travelling quietly, you

understand—*incog.*, if one may say so—travelling without form or expense, in search of a little peace and quietness. I have not a single attendant with me, nor has my wife her maid. Mrs. Hardcastle," he said, leaning back, the better to introduce his wife.

The lady bowed graciously to Mr. and Mrs. Dundyke, and the former, in his flurry to acknowledge the condescension, managed to upset the coffee-pot. Mrs. Dundyke saw a stylish woman of thirty—at least, if a great deal of dress can constitute style. She had a handsome, but deadly pale face, with bold eyes, black as her husband's.

"I feel really glad to make your acquaintance," resumed Mr. Hardcastle. "Standing aloof, as I have purposely done, from the persons of condition staying in the hotel, I had begun to find it slow."

"Sir, I am sure I'm greatly flattered," said Mr. Dundyke. "Have you been long here, sir?"

"About three weeks or a month," replied the gentleman, carelessly. "We shall soon be thinking of going."

Mr. Dundyke did indeed feel flattered, and with reason, for the firm in question was of the very first consideration, and he was overwhelmed with the honour vouchsafed him. "A Lord Mayor might be proud to know him," he exclaimed to his

wife, when they got upstairs from the breakfast. "I hope he'll give me his friendship when I am in the Chair."

"I think they have the next room to ours," observed Mrs. Dundyke. "I saw the lady standing at the door there this morning, when I was peeping out, wondering which was the way down to breakfast. Is it not singular they should be travelling in this quiet way, without any signs of their wealth about them?"

"Not at all singular," said the shrewd common-councilman. "They are so overdone with grandeur at home, these rich merchants, with their servants, and state, and ceremony, that it must be a positive relief to get rid of it altogether for a time, and live like ordinary people. I can understand the feeling very well."

It was more than Mrs. Dundyke could; and though, from that morning, the great merchant and his lady took pains to cultivate the intimacy thus formed, she never took to them so cordially as her husband. He, if one may use the old saying in such a sense, fell over head and ears in love with both, but Mrs. Dundyke never could feel quite at home with either. No doubt the sense of her own inferiority of position partly caused this: *she* felt, if her husband did not, that they were no society, even abroad, for the powerful Mr. and Mrs. Hard-

castle. And, in her inmost heart, she did not like the lady. Her attire was ten times as costly and abundant as Mrs. Dundyke's, and she would wear more jewellery at one time than the latter had ever seen in all her life; and that was perhaps as it should be; but Mrs. Dundyke was apt to take likings and dislikings, and she could not like this lady, try as she would. She was certainly not a gentlewoman; and Mrs. Dundyke, with all her previous life's disadvantages of position, was that at heart, and could appreciate one. She decidedly wore rouge on her cheeks in an evening; she was not choice in her expressions at all times; and she was fond of wine, and did not object to brandy.

One morning Mrs. Dundyke happened to be in Mrs. Hardcastle's room, when the English waiter entered.

"My master's compliments, madam," he said, "and he hopes Mr. Hardcastle has some news for him this morning."

The lady's face went crimson, the first time Mrs. Dundyke had seen any natural colour on it, and she answered, in a haughty tone, that Mr. Hardcastle was not then in—when he was, the man could speak with him.

"For it is now a fortnight, madam, since he has daily promised to——"

"I have nothing to do with it," interrupted Mrs.

Hardcastle, imperiously motioning the waiter from the room; "you must address yourself to my husband."

Mrs. Dundyke wondered what this little scene could mean. Had it been people of less known wealth than the Hardcastles, she might have thought it bore reference to the settlement—or non-settlement—of the bill. But that could scarcely happen with them.

"What are you thinking of, Betsey?" Mr. Dundyke asked her that same day, she sat so deep in thought.

"I was thinking of Mr. Hardcastle's eyes."

"Of Mr. Hardcastle's eyes!" echoed the common-councilman.

"Just then I was, David. The fact is, they puzzle me—they are always puzzling me. I feel quite certain I have seen them somewhere, or eyes exactly like them."

"They are as handsome eyes as ever I saw," was the answer.

"They may be handsome, but I don't like them. But that it is wrong to say it, I could almost say I hate them. They frighten me, David."

"That's just one of your foolish fancies," cried Mr. Dundyke, in wrath. "You are always taking them up, you know."

A day or two after this, Mr. Hardcastle came

straight into the presence of Mr. Dundyke, some papers in his hand. "My dear sir," he said, "I want you to do me a favour."

The common-councilman jumped up and placed a chair for the great man, delighted at the prospect of doing *him* a favour.

"I wrote home a few days ago for them to send me a letter of credit on the bankers here. It came this morning, and just see what they have done!"

Mr. Hardcastle tossed, as he spoke, the letter of credit to Mr. Dundyke. Now the latter, shrewd man of business though he was amid his own chests of tea, knew very little of these foreign letters of credit, their forms, or their appearance. All he could make out of the present one was, that it was a sort of order to receive one hundred pounds.

"Don't you see the error?" exclaimed Mr. Hardcastle. "They have made it payable to my uncle, Stephen Hardcastle, instead of to me. *My* name's not Stephen, so it would be perfectly useless for me to present it. How the clerks came to make so foolish a mistake I cannot tell. Some one of them I suppose, in the pressure of business, managed to give unintelligible orders to the bankers, and so caused the error."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Dundyke.

"Now I want to know if you can let me have this sum. I shall write immediately to get the

thing rectified, and if you can accommodate me for a few days, until the needful comes, I will then repay you with many thanks."

"But, dear me, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Dundyke,—"not but what I should be proud to do anything for you that I could, in my poor way—you don't suppose I've got a hundred pound here? Nor the half! nor the quarter of it!"

Mr. Hardcastle carelessly smiled, and played with his glittering cable watch-chain.

"I should not like to offer you what I *have* got, sir," continued the common-councilman, "but I am sure if you took it as no offence, and it would be of any temporary use to you——"

"Oh, thank you! No, it's not that," interrupted the great merchant. "Less than the hundred pounds would not be worth the trouble of borrowing. You have nothing like that sum, you say?"

Out came Mr. Dunkyke's purse and pocket-book. He counted over his store, and found that, English and French money combined, he possessed twenty-two pounds, eleven shillings. The twenty pounds, notes and gold, he pushed towards Mr. Hardcastle, the odd money he returned to his pocket. "You are quite welcome, sir, for a few days, if you will condescend to make use of it."

"I feel extremely obliged to you," said Mr. Hardcastle; "I am half inclined to avail my-

self of your politeness. The fact is, Dundyke," he continued, confidentially, "my wife has been spending money wholesale, this last week—falling in love with a lot of useless jewellery, when she has got a cartload of it at home. I let her have what money she wanted, counting on my speedy remittances, and, upon my word, I am nearly drained. I will write you an acknowledgment."

"Oh no, no, sir, pray don't trouble to do that," cried the confiding common-councilman, "your word would be your bond all over the world." And Mr. Hardcastle laughed pleasantly, as he gathered up the money.

"Can you let me have five francs, David," said Mrs. Dundyke, coming in soon afterwards, when her husband was alone.

"Five francs! What for?"

"To pay our washing bill. It comes to four francs something; so far as I can make out their French figures."

"I don't know that you can have it, Mrs. D."

"But why?" she inquired, meekly.

"I have just lent most of my spare cash to Mr. Hardcastle. He received a hundred pound this morning from England, but there was a stupid error in the letter of credit, and he can't touch the money till the order has been back home to be rectified."

The information set Mrs. Dundyke thinking. She had just returned from a walk, and it was in coming up the stairs that a chambermaid had met her and given her the washing-bill. Not being accustomed to French writing and accounts, she could not readily puzzle it out, and, bill in hand, had knocked at Mrs. Hardcastle's door, intending to crave that lady's assistance. Mr. Hardcastle opened it only a little way.

"Is Mrs. Hardcastle at leisure, if you please, sir?" she asked.

"No; she's not in. I'll send her to you when she comes," was his reply, as he re-closed the door. And yet Mrs. Dundyke was almost certain she saw the tip of Mrs. Hardcastle's gown, as if she were sitting in the room on the right, the door opening to the left. And she also saw distinctly the person who had been once pointed out to her as the landlord of the hotel. He was standing at the table, counting money—a note or two, it looked, and a little gold. There was food in this to employ Mrs. Dundyke's thoughts, now she knew, or supposed, that very money was her husband's. A sudden doubt whether all was right—she afterwards declared it many times—flashed across her mind. But it left her as soon as thought: left her ashamed of doubting such people as the Hardcastles, even for a moment. She remained thinking, though.

"I know these foreign posts are uncertain," she observed, arousing herself, "and it will take, I suppose, eight or ten days before Mr. Hardcastle's remittance can reach him. Suppose it should not come when he expects, or that there should be another mistake in it?"

"Well?"

"Why—as we cannot afford to remain on here an indefinite period, waiting; at least, I suppose you would not like to do so, David; I was thinking it might be better for you to write home for more money yourself, and make certain."

"Just leave me to manage my own business, Betsey, will you: I am capable, I hope," was the common-councilman's ungracious answer. Nevertheless, he adopted his wife's suggestion.

* * * *

Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle continued all grace and smiles, pressing their champagne upon Mr. Dundyke and his wife at dinner, and hiring carriages, in which all the four drove out together. The common-councilman was rapidly overcoming his repugnance to a table-d'hôte, but the sumptuous one served in the hotel was very different from those he had been frightened with on his journey, and in the third week of his stay his wife had to let out all his waistcoats. The little excursions in the country he cared less for. The lovely country

about Geneva was driven over again and again: Ferney, Coppet, the houses of Madame de Staël and Voltaire, all were visited, not much, it is to be feared, to the edification of the common-councilman. Thus three weeks from the time of their first arrival, passed rapidly away, and Mr. Dundyke and his wife felt they could not afford the time to linger longer in Geneva. They now only waited for the repayment of the twenty pounds from Mr. Hardcastle, and, strange to say, that gentleman's money did not arrive. *He* could not account for it, and gave vent to a few lordly explosions each morning that the post came in and brought him no advice of it.

"I'll tell you what it is!" he suddenly observed one morning—"I'll lay a thousand pounds to a shilling they have misunderstood my instructions, and have sent the money on to Genoa, whither we are bound after leaving here!"

"What a disaster!" uttered Mr. Dundyke. "Will the money be lost, sir?"

"No fear of that: nobody can touch it but myself. But look at the inconvenience it is causing, keeping me here! And you also!"

"I cannot remain longer," said Mr. Dundyke; "my time is up, and I may not exceed it. You can give me an order to receive the 20*l.* in London, sir: it will be all the same."

"But, my good fellow, how will you provide for the expenses of your journey to London?"

"I have managed that, sir," said the common-councilman. "I wrote home for thirty pounds."

"And is it come?" asked Mr. Hardcastle, turning his eye full upon the common-councilman with the startling rapidity of a flash of lightning. Mrs. Dundyke noticed, with astonishment, the look and the eager gesture: neither ever faded from her recollection.

"They came this morning," said the common-councilman. "I have them both safe here," touching the breast-pocket of his coat. "They were in them letters you saw me receive."

On rising from breakfast, Mr. Dundyke strolled out of the hotel, and found himself on the borders of the lake. The day was fearfully hot, and he began to think a row might be pleasant. A boat and two men were at hand, waiting to be hired, and he proceeded to haggle about the price, for one of the boatmen spoke English.

"I have spent a deal of money since I have been here, one way or another," he soliloquized, "and the bill I expect will be awful. But it wont be much addition, this row—as good be hung for a sheep as a lamb—so here goes."

He stepped into the boat, anticipating an hour's enjoyment. A short while after this, Mrs. Hard-

castle, accompanied by Mrs. Dundyke, came on to Rousseau's Island. Mr. Dundyke was not so far off then, but that his wife recognised him. Mr. Hardcastle was the next to come up.

"What are you looking at?" Why, who's that in a boat there? Surely not Dundyke! Give me the glass."

"Yes, it is," said Mrs. Dundyke.

"Where in the name of wonder is he off to, this melting day? To drown himself?"

The ladies laughed.

"Ah! I see; he can't stand it. The men are bearing off to the side—going to land him there. They had better put back."

Mrs. Dundyke sat down underneath the poplar trees, spreading a large umbrella over her head, and took out her work. Mrs. Hardcastle was never seen to do any work, but she seated herself under the shade of the umbrella; and the gentleman, leaving them to themselves, walked back again over the suspension bridge.

CHAPTER IV.

A MYSTERY.

WHICH of the three wore the deepest tint, the darkest blue—the skies, the hills, or the lake? Each was of a different shade, but all were blue and beautiful; and on all lay the aspect of complete repose. The two ladies, in that little garden near the Hôtel des Bergues, Rousseau's Island, as it is called, and which you who have sojourned in Geneva remember well, looking out over the lake at the solitary boat bearing away towards the right, noticed that no other object broke the prospect's stillness. It was scarcely a day for a row on Geneva's lake. Not a breath of air arose to counteract the vivid heat of the August sun; hot and shadeless he poured forth his overpowering blaze; and, lovely as the lake is, favoured by nature and renowned in poetry, it was more lovely that day to look at than to glide upon.

So thought the gentleman in that solitary boat, our friend Mr. David Dundyke—or, let us give

him the title he had of late aspired to, David Dundyke, Esquire. He felt, to use his own words, "piping hot;" he sat on one side of the boat, and the sun burnt his back; he changed to the other, and it blistered his face; he tried the stern, and the sun seemed to be all round him. He looked up at the Jura, with a vain longing that they might be transported from their site to where they could screen him from his hot tormentor: he turned and gazed at the Alps, and wished he could see on them a shady place, and that he was in it; but, wherever he looked and turned, the sun seemed to blind and to scorch him. Some people, clayey mortals though the best of us are, might have found poetry, or food for it, in all that lay around; but David Dundyke had no poetry in his heart, still less in his head. He glanced, with listless, half-shut eyes, at the two men who were rowing him along; and began to wonder how any men could be induced to row, that burning day, even to obtain a portion of the world's idol—money. David Dundyke cared not, not he, for the scenery around; he never cared for anything in his life that was not substantial and tangible. What was the common scenery of nature to him, since it could not add to his wealth or enhance his importance?—and that was all the matter at *his* heart. He had never looked at it all the way from London to Geneva; he did not look

at that around him now. Geneva itself, its lovely surrounding villas, its picturesque lake, the glorious chain of mountains on either side, even Mont Blanc in the distance, were as nothing to him. For some days after his arrival at Geneva, the mountain had remained obstinately enshrouded in clouds; but one evening that he and his wife were walking outside the town with Mr. Hardcastle, it was pointed out to him, standing proudly forth in all its beauty; and he had stared at it with just as much interest as he would have done at the hill in Greenwich Park covered with snow. He had seen the lovely colour, the dark, brilliant blue of the Rhone's waters, as they escaped from the lake to mingle with those of the thick, turbulent Arve; and he did not care to notice the contrast in the streams. There were no associations in his mind connected with that fair azure lake, whence coursed the one; he had no curiosity as to the never-changing glaciers that were the source of the other.

But, had Mr. Dundyke's soul been wholly given up to poetry and sentiment, it would have been lost that day in the overpowering heat. He bore it as long as he could, and then suddenly told the men to bear to the right and put him on shore. This movement had been observed by Mr. Hardcastle, from the little island, as you may remember. The men, not sorry perhaps to be off the lake them-

selves, inured though they were to Geneva's August sun, made speedily for a shady place, and landed him.

"Ah! this is pleasant," exclaimed Mr. Dundyke, throwing himself at full length on the cool and shady grass. "It is quite Heaven, this is, after that horrid burning lake." The two boatmen laid on their oars and rested.

"How thirsty it has made me!" he resumed, "I could drink the lake dry. What a luxury some iced wine would be now! And ice is so cheap and plentiful up at the hotel yonder. Suppose I send the boat back for Mr. Hardcastle, and the two women? And tell 'em it's Paradise, sitting here, in comparison with the hot hotel; and drop in a hint about the iced wine? He will be sure to take it, and be glad of the excuse. The women would find it rather of the ratherest for heat, coming across the lake, but charming when they got here. 'Tain't far, and their complexions are not of the spoiling sort. Mrs. D.'s ain't of no particular colour at all just now, except red; and t'other's is like chalk. Oh! let 'em risk it."

Taking out his silver pencil-case (as the men deposed to subsequently) he tore a leaf from his pocket-book, scribbled a few lines on it, and folding it, directed it to —— Hardcastle, Esquire: and it had never occurred to Mr. Dundyke until that

moment, and the fact struck him as a singular one, that he was ignorant of —— Hardcastle, Esquire's christian name. The men received the note and their orders, and then prepared to push off.

"We com back when we have give dis; com back for de jontilmans?" asked the one who spoke English.

"Come back! of course you are to come back," responded the common-councilman. "How am I to get home, else? But you are to bring the two ladies and the gentleman, and some ice and some wine; and to look sharp about it. Take care that the bottles don't get broke in the boat."

The men rowed away, leaving Mr. Dundyke lying there. They made good speed to the Hôtel des Bergues, according to orders, but were told that neither Mr. nor Mrs. Hardcastle was in. This caused a delay of two good hours. The boatmen lingered near the door of the hotel, waiting; and at last one of the waiters bethought himself that the ladies might be on Rousseau's Island. There they were found, and Mrs. Hardcastle read the note.

"What do you say?" she asked, tossing it to Mrs. Dundyke. "Shall we go?"

"But where is Mr. Hardcastle, ma'am?"

"Who's to know? He may be gone round to meet your husband. He saw the probable spot the

boat was making for. We may as well go. Perhaps they are both waiting for us. Waiter," continued Mrs. Hardcastle, in her customary imperious manner, "let some wine be placed in the boat, and plenty of ice."

Under cover of umbrellas, the two ladies were rowed across the hot lake to the place where the men had left Mr. Dundyke. But no trace of that gentleman could now be seen; and they sat down in the shade to cool their heated faces, glad of the respite. Mrs. Hardcastle helped herself to some wine and ice, and Mrs. Dundyke presently took her work out of her pocket.

"How industrious you are!" exclaimed the idle woman. "What do you say the embroidery is for? A shirt front?"

Mrs. Dundyke displayed her work. It was for a shirt-front, and the embroidery was beautiful. She was doing two of them, she said. Her husband would require them during his shrievalty.

"I'd not take such trouble for my husband, though he were made king to-morrow," exclaimed Mrs. Hardcastle.

After making that remark she took some more wine, and subsequently dropped asleep. Mrs. Dundyke, engaged in her labour of love, for she loved both the work itself and him who was to wear it, let the time slip on unconsciously. It was only

when the afternoon shadows struck on her view as becoming long, when the sun had changed his place from one part of the heavens to another, that a vague feeling of alarm stole over her.

"Where *can* he be? What is the time?"

She spoke aloud. Mrs. Hardcastle started at the words, and stared to see how the day had gone on. She, Mrs. Hardcastle, was the first to call out the name of Mr. Dundyke. She called it several times, and she had a loud, coarse, harsh voice; but only echo answered her. The boatmen woke up from their slumbers, and shouted in their patois, but there came no response from Mr. Dundyke. A sickening fear, whose very intensity made her heart cold, rushed over Mrs. Dundyke. Her hands shook; the red of her face turned to pallor.

"Why, you never mean to say you are alarmed!" exclaimed Mrs. Hardcastle, looking at her in surprise.

"No—no, ma'am, not exactly alarmed," returned poor Mrs. Dundyke, half ashamed to confess to the feeling. But her quivering lips gave the lie to her words. "I do think it strange he should go away, knowing he had sent for us. I was quite easy at first, thinking he had gone to sleep somewhere, overpowered with the heat. There is no danger, I suppose, that—that—anyone could fall into the water from this spot?"

There was certainly no danger of that: and the boatmen laughed at the notion, for the bank and the water were at that place nearly on a level.

"A man might walk in if he felt so inclined," observed Mrs. Hardcastle, jestingly, "but he could scarcely enter it in any other manner. And your husband is not one to cut short his life for pleasure."

Not he, indeed! Never a man less likely to make his own quietus than plain practical David Dundyke, with his future aspirations and his harmless ambition. His wife knew that the Lord Mayor's chair, shining in the distant vista, would alone have kept him from plunging head foremost into the most tempting lake that ever bubbled in the sunlight.

"There is no marvel about it," said Mrs. Hardcastle. "The boatmen were kept two hours at the hotel, remember, before we were found, and Mr. Dundyke naturally grew tired of waiting, and went away, thinking we should not come."

"But where can he be?" cried Mrs. Dundyke. "What has he done with himself?"

"He has gone back by land. There was no other course for him, if he thought—as he no doubt did think—that the boatman had misunderstood his orders and would not return."

"But, ma'am, he does not know his way back."

"Not know it! Instinct would tell it him. He has only to keep the lake on his right, and follow his nose; he would soon be in Geneva."

It was so probable a solution of the mystery, that Mrs. Dundyke had been unreasonable not to adopt it; indeed she was glad to do it; and they got into the boat, and were rowed back again, expecting Mr. Dundyke would be at the hotel. But they did not find him there. And it was nearly five o'clock then.

"That's nothing," said Mrs. Hardcastle. "The day is so hot he would take his time walking. My husband has not been in either, it seems. Rely upon it they have met and are together; they have turned into some cool café."

The ladies went upstairs together, each into her respective chamber: it has been said that the rooms joined. But that undefined dread, amounting to a positive agony, weighed still on the spirits of Mrs. Dundyke. She could not rest. Mrs. Hardcastle was attiring herself for dinner; not so Mrs. Dundyke; she stood at the door peeping out, hoping to see her husband appear in the long corridor. While thus looking, there came, creeping up the stairs, Mr. Hardcastle, stealing along, as it seemed to Mrs. Dundyke, to shun observation, his boots white, as if he had walked much in the dusty roads, his face scratched, and one of his

fingers sprained (as she learnt afterwards) and bound up with a handkerchief.

"Oh, sir!" she cried, darting forward in high excitement, "where is he? where is Mr. Dundyke? What has happened to him?"

Mr. Hardcastle stood for a moment transfixed, and, unless Mrs. Dundyke was strangely mistaken, his face changed colour. She associated no suspicion with that pallor *then;* she but thought of her own ill manners in accosting him so abruptly.

"What of your husband?" he asked, rallying himself. "*I* don't know anything of him. Is he not in?"

Mrs. Dundyke explained. Mrs. Hardcastle, hearing their voices, came out of her room and helped her.

"Is that all?" exclaimed Mr. Hardcastle, when he had listened, and his tone was one of indifference. "Oh, he will soon be back. If he is not in, in time for dinner, Mrs. Dundyke, you can go down with us. Don't alarm yourself."

"But have you not seen him?—not been with him?" urged poor Mrs. Dundyke.

"I have never seen him since breakfast."

"We thought you might have walked round by the shore to join him, as you saw this morning where the boat was making for," remarked Mrs. Hardcastle.

He turned savagely upon her, his eyes glaring like a tiger's.

"No, madam," he said, with concentrated passion, "none save a fool would undertake such a walk to-day. I have been in the town, executing various commissions," he added, changing his tone, and addressing Mrs. Dundyke, "and a pretty accident I had nearly met with: in avoiding a restive horse on the dusty quays, I slipped down, with my face on some flint stones."

Mrs. Dundyke would not go down to dinner, but Mrs. Hardcastle fetched her into her own room afterwards, and ordered tea brought up, and they were both very kind to her, buoying up her spirits, and laughing at her fears. Her husband had only lost his way, they urged, and would be home fast enough by morning—a rare joke they would have with him about running away, when he did come.

It was eleven o'clock when Mrs. Dundyke wished them good night, and retired to her chamber, feeling like one more dead than alive. It is probable that few of us can form any adequate idea of her sensations. But for that horrible, mysterious dread, which seemed to have come upon her without sufficient cause, the mere absence of her husband ought not so very much to have alarmed her. She felt a conviction, sure and certain, that some dreadful fate had overtaken

him; and, in that dread torture of suspense, she would have given her own life up the next moment, oh, how willingly, to see him return.

She stood at the open window of her room, leaning far out of it, hoping to see him come round the corner of the street, (stay, not so much hoping as *wishing*,) foot-sore and travel-worn, having lost his way and found it again. She wondered whether anyone was still up, to let him in, if he did come; if not, she would steal downstairs herself, and work at the door fastenings until she undid them. It was with great difficulty, exercising the very utmost self-control, that she stopped where she was, that she did not go out into the streets, searching for him.

While thus thinking, Mrs. Dundyke became aware that strange sounds were proceeding from the next room, though not at first had she heeded them. A fearful quarrel appeared to be taking place between Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle, and Mrs. Dundyke drew back and closed her window in tremor. Its substance she could not hear, did not wish to hear; but wild sobs and reproaches seemed to come from the lady, and sharp words, not unmixed with oaths, from the gentleman. Twice Mrs. Dundyke heard her husband's name mentioned, or her own ("Dundyke"); and the quarrel seemed to have reference to him. One sentence of

Mr. Hardcastle's came distinctly on her ear, apparently in answer to some threat or reproach; it was to the effect that Mrs. Hardcastle might leave him as soon as she pleased; might take her departure then, in the midnight hour. After awhile the anger appeared to subside, silence supervened, and Mrs. Dundyke watched through the live-long night. But her husband did not come.

With the morning Mrs. Hardcastle came to her. She said they had received letters which must cause them to depart for Genoa, where they found their remitted money had really been sent.

"But, ma'am," urged poor Mrs. Dundyke, "surely Mr. Hardcastle will not go and leave me alone in this dreadful uncertainty!"

"He intends to stay until the evening; he will not leave you a moment earlier than he is obliged. Perhaps your husband will make his appearance this morning."

In the course of the morning, Mr. Hardcastle went with the two boatmen to the place where they had landed Mr. Dundyke on the previous day, and a gentleman named by the proprietor of the hotel accompanied them; but not the slightest trace of him could be found, though some hours were spent in exploring. In the evening, by the six o'clock diligence, Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle left Geneva, the former handing to Mrs. Dundyke an order upon

the house in London, Hardcastle and Co., for the twenty pounds he had borrowed of her husband. He regretted, he said, his inability to furnish her, then, with any funds she might require, but he had barely sufficient to carry himself and wife to Genoa. If Mrs. Dundyke approved, he would, with the greatest pleasure, forward from that city any sum she chose to name; for, being known there, his credit was unlimited. Mrs. Dundyke declined his offer, with thanks: she reflected that, if her husband returned, he would have his money with him; and in the event of his mysterious absence being prolonged, she might as well write home for money as borrow it from Mr. Hardcastle at Genoa. She wondered, but did not presume to ask, how he had procured funds for his own journey, and to discharge his hotel bill, which he paid before starting.

"Keep up your spirits, Mrs. Dundyke," he cheeringly said as he shook hands with her at parting. "Depend upon it, your husband will come home, and bring some good reason for his absence; and if it were not that I am compelled—compelled by business—to go on to Genoa, I would not leave you."

She sat down as if some cold shiver had seized upon her heart. It was in her own room that this farewell was spoken; and in that one moment, as

he released her hand, and his peculiar eyes rested on her in the parting, and then were lost sight of, it flashed into her mind where she had seen those eyes before. They were the eyes she had once so shrunk from at Westerbury; at least, they bore the same expression—Benjamin Carr's.

Mrs. Dundyke's pulses quickened, and she clasped her hands. For one single moment a doubt arose to her whether Mr. Hardcastle could be Mr. Hardcastle—whether he was not an impostor, Benjamin Carr, or any other, travelling under a false name; and a whole host of trifling incidents, puzzles to her hitherto, arose to her mind as if in confirmation. But the doubt did not last. That he was really anybody but the great Mr. Hardcastle—head, under his uncle, of the great house of Hardcastle and Co.—she did not believe. As to the resemblance in the eyes to those of Benjamin Carr, she concluded it must be accidental; and of Benjamin Carr's features she retained no recollection. She opened the order he had given her to receive the twenty pounds, and found it was signed "B. Hardcastle:" no Christian name in full. Mrs. Dundyke dismissed all doubts from her memory, and continued to believe implicitly in Mr. Hardcastle.

It was, perhaps, a somewhat curious coincidence —at least, you may deem it so, as events go on—

that on this same evening an English clergyman should arrive at Geneva, and put up at the hotel. It was the Rev. Wheeler Prattleton, who was visiting Switzerland in pursuance of his intentions (as you once heard mention of), accompanied by his eldest daughter. The strange disappearance of Mr. Dundyke had caused some stir in the hotel, and the clergyman was told of it.

"It is an uncommon name, papa—Dundyke," observed Miss Prattleton. "Do you think it can be the Dundykes who are relatives of Mrs. Arkell's?"

"What Dundykes?" returned Mr. Prattleton, his memory on these points not so retentive as his daughter's. "Has Mrs. Arkell relatives of the name?"

"Oh, papa, you forget. Mrs. Arkell's sister is a Mrs. Dundyke. I have often heard Travice Arkell speak of her; he calls her Aunt Betsey. They live in London."

"We will ascertain, Mary," said Mr. Prattleton, his sympathies aroused. "If this lady should prove to be Mrs. Arkell's sister, we must do all we can for her."

It was very soon ascertained, for the clergyman at once sent up his card, and requested an interview with Mrs. Dundyke. Mr. Prattleton threw himself completely into the affair, and became

almost painfully interested in it. He believed, as did all others, that nothing serious had occurred, but that from some unaccountable cause Mr. Dundyke remained absent—perhaps from temporary illness or accident; and every hour, as the days went on, was his return looked for. Mary Prattleton had the room vacated by the Hardcastles, Mr. Prattleton had one on the same floor; and their presence was of the very greatest comfort to poor, lonely, bereaved Mrs. Dundyke.

"Mary, I cannot tell you how I like her!" Mr. Prattleton impulsively exclaimed to his daughter. "She is a true lady; but so unobtrusive, so simple, so humble—there are few like her."

All the means they could think of were put in force to endeavour to obtain some clue to Mr. Dundyke, and to the circumstances of his disappearance. Mr. Prattleton took the conduct of the search upon himself. A Swiss peasant, or very small farmer, a man of known good character, and on whose word reliance might be placed, came forward and stated that on the day in question he had seen two gentlemen, whom he took to be English by their conversation, walking amicably together *away* from the lake, and about a mile distant from the spot of Mr. Dundyke's landing. The description he gave of these tallied with the persons of the missing man and Mr. Hardcastle. The stouter

of the two, he said, who wore a straw hat and a narrow green ribbon tied round it, carried a yellow silk handkerchief, and occasionally wiped his face, which looked very red and hot. The other—a tall, dark man—had a cane in his hand with a silver top, looking like a dog's head, which cane he whirled round and round as he walked, after the manner of a child's rattle. All this agreed exactly. Mr. Dundyke's hat was straw, its ribbon green and narrow, and the handkerchief, which Mrs. Dundyke had handed him clean that morning, was yellow, with white spots. And again, that action of whirling his cane round in the air, was a frequent habit of Mr. Hardcastle's. The country was scoured in the part where this peasant had seen them, and also in the direction that they appeared to be going, but nothing was discovered. Mr. Prattleton reminded Mrs. Dundyke that there were more yellow silk handkerchiefs in the world than one, that straw hats and green ribbons were common enough in Geneva, and that many a gentleman, even of those staying at the hotel, carried a silver-headed cane, and might twirl it in walking. "Besides," added the clergyman, "if Mr. Hardcastle had been that day with Mr. Dundyke, what possible motive could he have for denying it?"

"True; most true," murmured the unhappy lady. She was still unsuspicious as a child.

One of Mr. Prattleton's first cares had been to write to London, asking for the number of the notes, forwarded by the house in Fenchurch-street to Mr. Dundyke. It had of course been lost with him; as also anything else he might have had in the shape of letters and papers, for they were all in his pocket-book, and he had it about him. When the answer was received by Mr. Prattleton, he made inquiries at the different money-changers, and traced the notes, a twenty-pound and a ten-pound. They had been changed for French money at Geneva, on the day subsequent to Mr. Dundyke's disappearance: the halves were in the shop still, and were shown to the clergyman. The money-changer could not recollect who had changed them, except that it was an Englishman; he *thought* a tall man: but so many English gentlemen came in to change money, he observed, that it was difficult to recollect them individually.

The finding of these notes certainly darkened the case very much, and Mr. Prattleton went home with a slow step, thinking how he could break the news to Mrs. Dundyke. She was sitting in his daughter's room, and he disclosed the facts as gently as possible.

Mrs. Dundyke did not weep; did not cry aloud: her quiet hands were pressed more convulsively together in her lap; and that was all.

"If my husband were living, how could any-one else have the notes to change?" she said. "Oh, Mr. Prattleton, there is no hope! It is as I have thought from the first: he fell into the lake and was drowned."

"Nay," said the clergyman, "had he been drowned the notes would have been drowned too. Indeed, I do not think there is even a chance that he was drowned: had he got into the lake accidentally, (which is next to impossible, unless he rolled in from the grass,) he could readily have got out again. But I find that more money was sent him than this thirty pounds, Mrs. Dundyke. The two halves of a fifty-pound note were sent as well. Do you know anything of it?"

"Nothing," she answered. "I knew he wrote home for thirty pounds; I knew of no more."

Mr. Prattleton gave her the letter, received that morning from Fenchurch-street, and she found it was as the clergyman said. Mr. Dundyke had written for fifty pounds, as well as the thirty; and it had been sent in two half notes, the whole of the notes in two separate letters: three half notes in one letter, and three in the other, and both letters had been dispatched by the same post. There could be no reasonable doubt therefore that all the money had been received by Mr. Dundyke.

"But I cannot trace the fifty," observed Mr.

Prattleton, "and I have been to every money-changer's, and to every other likely place in Geneva. I went to the bank; I asked here at the hotel, but I can't find it. What do you want, Mary?"

Mary Prattleton had been for some few minutes trying to move a chest of drawers; the marble top made them heavy, and she desisted and looked at her father.

"I wish you would help me push aside these drawers, papa. My needle-book has fallen behind."

He advanced, and helped her to move the drawers from the wall. A chink, as of something falling, was heard, and a silver pencil-case rolled towards the feet of Mrs. Dundyke. She stooped mechanically to pick it up; and Miss Prattleton, who was stooping for her needle-book, was startled by a suppressed shriek of terror. It came from Mrs. Dundyke.

"It is my husband's pencil-case! it is my husband's pencil-case!"

"Dear, dear Mrs. Dundyke!" cried the alarmed clergyman, "you should not let the sight of it agitate you like this."

"You do not understand," she reiterated. "He had it with him on that fatal morning; he took it out with him. What should bring it back here, and without him? Where *is* he?"

Mr. Prattleton stood confounded; not able at first to take in quite the bearings of the case.

"How do you know he had it? He may have left it in the hotel."

"No, no, he did not. He went straight out from the breakfast-room, and, not a minute before, I saw him make a note with it on the back of a letter, and then return the pencil to the case in his pocket-book, where he always kept it, and put the pocket-book back into his pocket. How could he have written the note after the men landed him, telling us to join him there, without it?—he never carried but this one pencil. And now it is back in this room, and——oh, sir! the scales seem to fall from my eyes! If I am wrong, may Heaven forgive me for the thought!"

Her hands were raised, her whole frame was trembling; her livid face was quite drawn with the intensity of fear, of horror. Mr. Prattleton stood aghast.

"What do you say?" he asked, bending his ear, for the words on her lips had dropped to a low murmur. "WHAT?"

"*He has surely been murdered by Mr. Hardcastle.*"

CHAPTER V.

HOME, IN DESPAIR.

THE Reverend Mr. Prattleton literally recoiled at the words, and staggered back a few steps in his dismay. Not at first could he recover his amazement. The suggestion was so dreadful, so entirely, as he believed, uncalled for, that he began to doubt whether poor Mrs. Dundyke's trouble had not turned her brain.

"It surely, surely is so!" she impressively repeated. "He has been murdered, and by Mr. Hardcastle."

"Good heavens, my dear lady, you must not allow your imagination to run away with you in this manner!" cried the shocked clergyman. "A gentleman in Mr. Hardcastle's position of life——"

"Oh, stop! stop!" she interrupted; "*is* it his position of life? Is he indeed Mr. Hardcastle?"

And she began, in her agitation, to pour out forthwith the whole tale: the various half doubts of the Hardcastles, suppressed until now. Her

conviction that Mrs. Hardcastle was certainly not a lady, their embarrassments for money, and other little items. Then there had been the long absence of Mr. Hardcastle on the day of the disappearance; his sneaking upstairs quietly on his return, hurt and scratched, warm and dusty, as if he had walked far; his sudden change of colour when she asked after her husband, and the angry look turned upon his wife when she suggested that he had possibly been with Mr. Dundyke. There was the description given by the Swiss peasant of the two gentlemen he had seen walking together that day, and the furious quarrel she had heard at night, when her husband's name was mentioned. All was told to Mr. Prattleton, what she knew, what she thought; all with an exception: the one faint suspicion that had crossed her as to whether Mr. Hardcastle could be Benjamin Carr. She did not mention that. Perhaps it had faded from her memory; and Benjamin Carr, a gentleman born, would be no more likely to commit a murder than the real Mr. Hardcastle. However it may have been, she did not mention it, then, or at any other time.

How *could* the pencil have got back to the hotel, and into that room, unless brought by Mr. Hardcastle? The testimony of the Swiss peasant, of the two gentlemen he had seen walking together, was terribly significant now. Mr. Prattleton, who

had never been brought into contact with anything like murder in his life, felt as if he were on the eve of some awful discovery.

"It was so strange that people of the Hardcastles' position should be up here in one small room on the third floor of the hotel!" cried Mrs. Dundyke, mentioning the thought that had often struck her. "Mrs. Hardcastle said no other room was vacant when they came, and that may have been so; but would they not have changed afterwards?"

Mr. Prattleton went downstairs. He sought an interview with the host, and gleaned what information he could, not imparting a hint of these new suspicions. Could the host inform him who Mr. Hardcastle was?

The host supposed Mr. Hardcastle was—Mr. Hardcastle. Voilà tout! Although he did think that the name given in to the hotel at first was not so long as Hardcastle, but he was not quite sure; it had not been written down, only the number of the room they occupied. Monsieur and Madame had very much resented being put up on the third floor. It was the only room then vacant in all the hotel, and at first Madame said she would not take it, she would go to another hotel; but she was tired, and stopped, and the luggage, too, had been all brought in. Afterwards, when Madame was settled in it, she did not care to change. In what name

were Monsieur's letters addressed—Hardcastle? Ma foi, yes, for all he knew; but Monsieur's letters stopped at the post-office, as did those of three parts of the company in the hotel, and Monsieur went for them himself. Money? Well, Monsieur did seem short of money at times; but he had plenty at others, and he had paid up liberally at last. Other gentlemen sometimes ran short, when their remittances were delayed.

There was not a word in this that could tell really against Mr. Hardcastle. The host evidently spoke in all good faith; and Mr. Prattleton began to look upon Mrs. Dundyke's suspicions as the morbid fancies of a woman in trouble. He put another question to the landlord—what was his private opinion of this singular disappearance of Mr. Dundyke?

The landlord shook his head; he had had but one opinion upon the point for some days past. The poor gentleman, there was not the least doubt, had in some way got into the lake and been drowned. But the notes in his pocket-book? urged the clergyman—the money that had been changed at the money-changer's? Well, the fact must be, the host supposed, that his pocket-book was left upon the grass, or had floated on the water, and some thief had come across it and appropriated the contents.

Mr. Prattleton, after due reflection, became convinced that this must have been the case; and for the pencil-case, he believed that Mrs. Dundyke was in error in supposing her husband took it out with him.

Mrs. Dundyke was not so easily satisfied. She urged the strange fact of Mr. Hardcastle's appearance when he returned that day: his scratched face, his dusty clothes, his altogether disordered look, his sneaking up the stairs as if he did not want to be seen. But upon inquiry it was found that a gentleman, whose appearance tallied with the person of Mr. Hardcastle, did so fall on the dusty flint stones, in trying to avoid a restive horse, and his face was scratched and his hand hurt in consequence; and, as Mr. Prattleton observed, he really might be trying to avoid observation in coming up the hotel stairs, not caring to be met in that untidy state. The pencil-case was next shown to the boatmen; but they could not say whether it was the one the gentleman had written the note with. They were tired with the row in the hot sun, and did not take particular notice. One of them was certain that, whatever pencil the gentleman had used, he took it from his pocket; and he saw him tear the leaf out of the pocket-book to write upon.

Altogether it amounted to just this—that while Mr. Hardcastle *might* be guilty, he probably was

innocent. Mr. Prattleton inclined to the latter belief; and as the days went on, Mrs. Dundyke inclined to it also. The points fraught with suspicion began to lose their dark hue, and when there arrived a stranger at the hotel, who happened to know that old Mr. Hardcastle's nephew was travelling on the continent, and was much inclined to spend money faster than he got it, though otherwise honourable, Mrs. Dundyke's suspicions faded, and she reproached herself for having entertained them.

But nothing further could be heard of Mr. Dundyke; nothing further was heard, and it became useless to linger on in Geneva. That he was in Geneva's lake, she never doubted, and the place became hateful to her.

She travelled towards home in company with Mr. Prattleton and his daughter. At Paris they parted; they remaining in it for a few days, she proceeding to London direct, which she reached in safety. Poor Mrs. Dundyke! As she sat alone in the dark cab which was to take her to her now solitary home at Brixton, she perhaps felt the loss, the dreadful circumstances of it altogether, more keenly than she had felt them yet. She sat with dry eyes, but a throbbing brain, feeling that life for her had ended; that she was left in a world whose happiness had died out.

It was a very pretty white villa, with a lawn be

fore it, a encircled by carriage drive, with double gates. As the man drove in at one, and stopped before the entrance, and the door was thrown open to the light of the hall, Mrs. Dundyke became aware that some gentleman was standing there, behind the servant.

"Who is that, John?" she whispered.

"It's a stranger, ma'am; a gentleman who has just called. He seemed so surprised when I said you had not returned yet; but you drove up at the moment. And master, ma'am?"

Mrs. Dundyke did not answer. The servants knew that something was amiss; but she had not courage to explain then; in fact, she could scarcely suppress her emotion sufficiently to speak with composure. The stranger came forward to meet her, and she recognised the gentleman who had assisted them in Grenoble, and had given his name as Robert Carr.

"You see I have availed myself of your invitation to call," he said. "It is curious I should happen to come to-night when you are only returning. I fancied you did not intend to remain away so long. But where is Mr. Dundyke?"

She turned with him into one of the sitting-rooms—an elegant room of good proportions. The chandelier was lighted; a handsome china tea-service, interspersed with articles of silver, stood

on the table; cold meats and other good things were ready; and altogether it was a complete picture of home comfort, of easy competency. The thought that *he*, who had been the many years partner of her life, would never come back to this again, combined with the home question of the Rev. Mr. Carr, struck out of her what little composure she had retained, and Mrs. Dundyke sank down in an easy chair, and burst into a storm of sobs.

To say that the young clergyman stood in consternation, would be saying little. He was not used to scenes, did not like them; and he felt inwardly uncomfortable, not knowing what he ought to say or do.

"Pray, forgive me," she murmured, when she had recovered sufficiently to speak. "You asked after my husband. He is lost—he is gone. He will never come home again."

"Lost!" repeated Robert Carr.

Mrs. Dundyke told her tale, and the young man listened in utter astonishment. He had never heard of such a thing in all his life; had never imagined anything so strange. It seemed that he could not be tired of asking questions—of hazarding conjectures. He *wished* he had been there, he said; he was sure that the search *he* would have instituted would have found him, dead or alive.

And it was a somewhat remarkable fact that everybody, forthwith destined to hear the story, said the same. So prone are we to under-rate the exertions of other people, and over-rate our own.

But simple, courteous Mrs. Dundyke, could not forget the duties of hospitality amid her great sorrow. She went upstairs for a minute to take off her travelling things, and then quietly made tea for Robert Carr, asking him questions about himself as he drank it.

He had come straight to London from Grenoble, on business connected with an assistant ministry he expected to get in November, and then went to Holland. He had been back in London now about a week, but should soon be returning to Holland, as his wife was not in good health.

"His wife!" Mrs. Dundyke repeated in surprise. She thought he looked too young to have a wife.

Robert Carr laughed. He had a wife and two children, he said; he had married young.

Mrs. Dundyke told him that she thought they were connected—in fact, she knew they were, for old Mrs. Dundyke used to say so. "I do not quite remember how she made it out," continued Mrs. Dundyke; "I think she was a cousin in the second degree to the Miss Hughes's of Westerbury. They were——"

Mrs. Dundyke stopped short. None were more

considerate than she of the feelings of others; and it suddenly struck her that the young clergyman before her, a gentleman himself, might not like to be reminded of these things.

"They were dressmakers, if you speak of my mother's sisters," he quietly said; "I have heard her say so. She was a lady herself in mind and manners; but her family were quite inferior."

Mrs. Dundyke did not feel her way altogether clear. She remembered hearing of the elopement; she remembered certain unpleasant subsequent rumours—that Martha Ann Hughes remained with Mr. Carr in Holland, although the ceremony of marriage had not passed between them. Always charitably judging, she supposed now that they must have been married at some subsequent period; and this, their eldest son, called himself Robert *Carr*. But it was not a topic that she felt comfortable in pursuing.

"You say that your mother is dead?" she resumed.

"She has been dead about five years. We are three of us: I; my brother Thomas, who was born two years after me; and my sister, Mary Augusta, who is several years younger. There were two other girls between my brother and Mary, but they died."

"Mr. Carr is in business in Rotterdam?"

"Yes; partner in a merchant's house there. He has saved money, and is well off."

Mrs. Dundyke faintly smiled; she was glad for a moment to make a semblance of forgetting her own woes. "Those random young men often make the most sober ones when they settle down. Your father was wild in his young days."

"Was he? I'm sure I don't know. You should see him now: a regular steady-going old Dutchman, fat and taciturn, who smokes his afternoons away in the summer-house. He has not been very well of late years; and I tell him he ought to spend his hours of recreation in taking exercise, not in sitting still and smoking."

"Does he keep up any intercourse with his relatives in Westerbury?" asked Mrs. Dundyke, for she had heard through Mildred Arkell that Westerbury never heard anything of its renegade son, Robert Carr, and did not know or care whether he was dead or alive—in fact, had forgotten all remembrance of him.

"Not any—not the least. I fancy my father and mother must have had some disagreement with their home friends, for they never spoke of them. I remember, when I was a little boy, my mother getting news of the death of a sister; but how it came to her I'm sure I don't know."

"She had two sisters, and she had a brother," said Mrs. Dundyke. "I heard that Mary died. Are the other sister and the brother living?"

"I really do not know. If we had possessed no relatives in the world, we could not have lived more completely isolated from them. I believe my grandfather is living, and in Westerbury—at least, I have not heard of his death."

"Have you lived entirely in Rotterdam?" she asked, her interest very much awakened, she scarcely knew why, for this young man. Perhaps it took its rise in the faint, sad thought, which *would* keep arising in spite of herself, that a terrible blow might be in future store for him, of whose possible existence he was evidently in utter ignorance.

"Our home has been in Rotterdam, but I and my brother have been educated in England. We were with a clergyman for some years in London, and then went to Cambridge. It would not have done for me to preach with a foreign accent," he added, with a smile.

"But you speak with a perfect accent," said Mrs. Dundyke; "as well as if you had never been out of England. Do you speak Dutch?"

"As a native; in fact, I suppose it may be said that I *am* a native. Dutch, English, German, and French—we speak them all well."

Poor Mrs. Dundyke heaved a bitter sigh. The words brought to her remembrance what her husband had said about their rubbing on with "we"

and "no;" but she would not let it go on again to emotion. She observed the same delicate look on this young man that had struck her at Grenoble; and he coughed rather frequently, always putting his hand to his chest at the time, as if the cough gave him pain.

"Will you let me ask you if you are very strong?" she said. "I do not think you look so."

"I was strong," he replied, "no one more so, until I met with a hurt. In riding one day at Cambridge, the horse threw me, and kicked me here," touching his chest. "Since then, I have had a cough, more or less, and am sometimes in slight pain. My father despatched me on that tour, when I met you, with a view of making me strong."

"Was the injury great at the time?"

"No, I think not; the doctors said not. I believe some of the small arteries were ruptured. I spit blood for some time after it; and, do you know," he added, looking suddenly up at her, "the last day or two I have been spitting it a little again."

"You must take care of yourself," said Mrs. Dundyke, after a pause.

"So I do. I am going to a doctor to-morrow morning, for I want to get into duty again, and should be vexed if anything stopped it."

"Have you ever done duty?"

"Of course; for a twelvemonth. I had my title in the diocese of Ely. I am in full orders now, and hope to be at work in November."

A doubt came over Mrs. Dundyke as she looked at his slender hands and his hollow cheek, whether he would ever work again. Robert Carr rose to bid her good-bye.

"Can I be of any service to you in any way?" he said, in a low, earnest tone, as he held her hand in his. "You cannot tell what a strange impression this tale has made upon me; and I feel as if I should like to go to Geneva, and prosecute the search still."

"You are very kind," she said; "but indeed there is nothing else that can be done. The environs of Geneva were scoured, especially on the side where, as I have told you, two gentlemen were seen who bore the resemblance to my husband and Mr. Hardcastle."

"I don't like that Mr. Hardcastle," cried the young man; "no, I don't. He ought not to have gone away, and left you in the midst of your distress. It was an unfeeling thing to do."

"He could not help it. He said he had urgent business at Genoa."

"The business should have waited, had it been mine. Well, if I can do anything for you, Mrs.

Dundyke, now or later, do let me. If what you say is correct—that we are related—I have a right to help you "

"Thank you very much. And remember," she added, in a voice almost as low as a whisper, "that should you ever be in—in—trouble, or distress, or need a friend in any way, you have only to come to me."

What was in Mrs. Dundyke's mind as she spoke? What made her say it? She was thinking of that shock which might be looming for him in the future, it was hard to say how near or how distant. And she felt that she could love this young man almost like a son.

"I will see you again, Mrs. Dundyke, before I leave town," were his last words.

But he did not. When he reached his lodgings that night, he found a telegraphic despatch awaiting him from Rotterdam, saying that his father was taken dangerously ill.

And the Reverend Robert Carr hastened to Dover by the first train, en route for Holland.

CHAPTER VI.

NEWS FOR WESTERBURY.

It cannot be denied that the present time, this first day after coming home, was one of peculiar pain to Mrs. Dundyke. She would have to go over the sad and strange story again and again, and there was no help for it. The chief partners in Fenchurch-street naturally required the particulars; the few friends she had, the household servants, wished to hear them, and there was only herself to tell the tale.

By ten o'clock, on the morning after her arrival, the second partner of the house, who wore rings and a moustache, and had altogether been an object of envy to the unfortunate common-councilman, was sitting with Mrs. Dundyke. She had not put on widow's weeds; she would not yet; she had said to Mary Prattleton, with a burst of grief, that a widow's cap would take the last remnant of lingering hope out of her. She wore a rich black silk gown, trimmed with much crape, but the cap and bonnet of the widow she assumed not.

Mr. Knowles, a kind-hearted man, who did not want for good sense, dandy though he was in dress, sat twirling his sandy moustache, the very gravest concern pervading his countenance. Mrs. Dundyke, who had never seen this gentleman more than once or twice, sat in humility, struggling with her grief. His social position was of a different standing from what poor Mr. Dundyke's had ever been.

"You see, Mrs. Dundyke, one hardly knows how to act, or what to be at," he remarked, after they had talked for some time, and she had related to him the details (always excepting any suspicion she might once have entertained of Mr. Hardcastle) as closely as she could. Apart from the grief, the concern for your husband personally, it is altogether so awkward an affair, in a business point of view: we don't know whether we are to consider him as dead or alive."

She shook her head.

"There is little hope that he is alive, sir."

"Well, it would really seem like it. But what *can* have become of him?"

"There was the lake, you know."

"Yes."

A pause. Presently Mr. Knowles went on.

"When the letter came from that clergyman—Prattleton, wasn't his name?—saying that Mr. Dun-

dyke was missing, and asking for the particulars of the money we had forwarded to him, we could not understand it '*Missing!*' cried old Mr. Knowles, who happened to have come to Fenchurch-street that day, 'one talks of a child being missing, but not of a man.' And when Mr. Prattleton's second letter came to us, giving some of the facts, I assure you we could with difficulty give credence to them."

"There is one little point I did not know of, sir; the sending to you for a fifty-pound note. My husband told me he was sending for the thirty pounds, but he did not say anything of the other. I cannot think why he sent for it."

Mr. Knowles took out his pocket-book.

"I happen to have Mr. Dundyke's letter, which was preserved quite accidentally, not being a strictly business one. You see, he only asks for the fifty pounds in a postscript, as if it were an afterthought. In fact, he says as much:" and Mrs. Dundyke's eyes filled as she looked on the well-known characters.

"P.S. Upon second thoughts, I doubt whether the 30*l.* will be enough for me. Be so good as send me a 50*l.* note in addition to it; in halves as the other."

"Which accordingly we did," resumed Mr. Knowles, as Mrs. Dundyke returned him the

letter. "And that note, you say, has not been traced?"

"No, sir, it has not."

"Well, it is altogether most strange. Of course whoever found the pocket-book (if the supposition that it was picked up on the bank of the lake be correct) may be keeping the fifty-pound note by him, but the probability is that he would have got rid of it at once, as he did the others."

"The most singular point to my mind throughout, sir, is the finding of the pencil-case in Mr. Hardcastle's room," said Mrs. Dundyke. "I can't get over that."

"Can't you? It appears to me easily explainable. The supposition that Mr. Dundyke took it out with him that morning must be a mistake. Mr. Hardcastle probably borrowed it from him at breakfast."

"I am quite sure, sir, he did not. I saw my husband put the pencil in its place in the pocket-book, and return the pocket-book to his pocket."

"Then he must have taken it out again when outside the room, and perhaps dropped it. Mr. Hardcastle may have picked it up, and carried it up to the chamber and forgotten it. There are many ways of accounting for that; but it is a pity the pencil was not found before Mr. Hardcastle's departure."

Mrs. Dundyke opened her lips to ask how then could her husband have written the pencilled note afterwards—that he never carried but that one; but she was weary with reiterating the same thing over and over again; and, after all, what Mr. Knowles said was possible. He might have dropped the pencil afterwards; Mr. Hardcastle might have picked it up and carried it to his room; and it certainly *might* have happened, it was not impossible, that her husband, contrary to custom, had a second pencil in his pocket.

"Shall we send the twenty-pound order to Hardcastle's house and get it cashed for you?" Mr. Knowles asked, when he was leaving. "I fancy that young Hardcastle is not very steady. He is a great deal on the continent, and I have heard he gambles."

Mrs. Dundyke thanked him and handed him the order. "Perhaps you would let the clerk inquire for Mr. Hardcastle's address at the same time, sir?" she said; "and whether he is still at Genoa. I should like to write and ask how he did find the pencil."

But when the order on Hardcastle and Co. was presented—as it was that same day—the house in Leadenhall-street declined to pay it, disclaiming all knowledge of the drawer. Upon the clerk's saying that it had been given by the nephew of

Mr. Hardcastle, senior, to Mrs. Dundyke, in liquidation of money borrowed at Geneva, the firm shrugged their shoulders, and recommended the clerk to apply personally to that gentleman, at his residence at Kensington. This information was conveyed to Mrs. Dundyke, and she at once said she should like to go herself.

She went up to Mr. Hardcastle's the next day, and the old gentleman received her very courteously. He was a venerable man with white hair, and was walking up and down the room, which opened to a conservatory. Mrs. Dundyke did not state any particulars at first; she merely said that she had an order on the house in Leadenhall-street for twenty pounds, money borrowed by his nephew; that the house had declined to pay it, and had referred it to him.

"Borrowed money?" he repeated, in a sharp tone, as if the words visibly annoyed him.

"Yes, sir," he borrowed it of my husband; "his remittances did not arrive from England."

Mr. Hardcastle put on his spectacles, and she noticed that his hands trembled, she thought with agitation. "I have a nephew," he said, "who lives principally upon the continent; a thankless scapegrace he is, and has caused me a world of trouble. He has not been in England for eighteen months now, and I hope he will not

come to it in a hurry; but he is always threatening it."

Mrs. Dundyke was surprised. "He told us, sir, that he had come from London recently; in fact, he said—he certainly implied—that he took a principal and active part in your house in Leadenhall-street."

"All boast, madam, all boast. He has not anything to do with it, and we would not let him have. I wonder he should say that, too! He is tolerably truthful, making a confession of his shortcomings, rather than hiding them."

"Is he at Genoa still, sir?"

"At where?" asked Mr. Hardcastle, looking at Mrs. Dundyke through his spectacles, which he had been all the time adjusting.

"He went on to Genoa, sir, from Geneva. I asked whether he was there still."

"He has not been at Geneva or at Genoa," said Mr. Hardcastle; "latterly, at any rate."

"Yes he has, sir; he was at Geneva when we got to it in July, and he stayed some time. He then went on to Genoa."

"Then he has deceived me," said Mr. Hardcastle, in a vexed tone. "I don't know why he should; it does not matter to me what place he is in. What is this, madam—the order? This is not his handwriting," hastily continued Mr.

Hardcastle, at the first glance, as he unfolded the paper.

"I saw him write it, sir," said Mrs. Dundyke.

"Madam, it is no more like his writing than it is like yours or mine," was the testy answer. "And —what is this signature, *B.* Hardcastle? My nephew's name is Thomas."

There was a momentary silence. Mr. Hardcastle sat looking at the written order, knitting his brow in reflection.

"Madam, I do not think he could have been at Genoa when this was dated," he resumed; "I had a letter from him just about this time, written from Brussels. Stay, I will get it."

He opened a desk in the room and produced the letter. Singular to say, it bore date the 10th of August, the very day that the order was dated. The post-marks, both in Brussels and London, agreed with the date.

"It is impossible that it could have been he who wrote this order, madam, as you must perceive. Being in Brussels, he could not have been in Geneva. That this letter is in my nephew's handwriting, I assure you on my honour. You may read it; it is about family affairs, but that does not matter."

Mrs. Dundyke read the letter: it was not a long one. And then she looked in a dreamy sort of way at Mr. Hardcastle.

"Madam, I fear you must have been imposed upon."

"Have you two nephews, sir?"

"I never had but this one in my life, ma'am; and I have found him one too many."

His wife is a showy woman, very pale, with handsome features," persisted Mrs. Dundyke, in a tone as dreamy as her gaze. Not that she disbelieved that venerable old man, but it all seemed so great a mystery.

"His wife! my nephew has no wife: I don't know who'd marry him. I tell you, ma'am, you have been taken in by some swindler who must have assumed his name. Though egad! my nephew's little better than a swindler himself, for he gets into debt with everybody who will let him."

Mrs. Dundyke sat silent a few moments, and she then told her tale—told everything that had occurred in connexion with her husband's mysterious fate. But when she came to hint her suspicions of Mr. Hardcastle's having been his destroyer, the old gentleman was visibly shocked and agitated.

"Good heavens! no! Spendthrift though he is, he is not capable of that awful crime. Madam, how do you suppose your husband lost his life? In a struggle? Did they quarrel?"

"I know nothing," answered poor Mrs. Dundyke.

"A quarrel and struggle it may have been. Mr. Hardcastle was a powerful man."

"A what? A powerful man, did you say, this Mr. Hardcastle?"

"Very powerful, sir; tall and strong. Standing nearly six feet high, and as dark as a gipsy."

"Thank Heaven for that relief!" murmured Mr. Hardcastle. "My nephew is one of the smallest men you ever saw, ma'am, short and slight, with fair curls: in fact, an effeminate dandy. There's his picture," added the old gentleman, throwing open the door of an inner room, "and when he next comes to England, and he is threatening it now, as you read in that letter, you shall see him. But, meanwhile, I will refer you to fifty persons, if you like, who will bear testimony that he is, in person, as I describe. There is no possible identity between them. Once more, thank Heaven!"

Mrs. Dundyke returned to her home. The affair seemed to wear a darker appearance than it had yet worn. And again her suspicions reverted to the man who had called himself Mr. Hardcastle.

We must now turn to Westerbury. That generally supine city was awakened out of its lethargy one morning, by hearing that Death had claimed Marmaduke Carr. On the very night that his grandson was at Mrs. Dundyke's, he was dying:

and in the morning, Westerbury heard that he was dead.

On the same day, the instant the news was conveyed to them, Squire Carr and his son and heir came over with all the speed that the train could bring them, and went bustling to the house of the dead man. There they found Mr. Fauntleroy, the solicitor to the just deceased Mr. Carr. He was a tall, large man, this lawyer; a clever practitioner, a fast-living man, and, by the way, the same scapegrace who had done that injury, in the shape of money, to Peter Arkell. But Mr. Fauntleroy had settled down since then, and had made an enormous deal of money; and he held some sway in Westerbury.

"Here's a pretty go!" cried Mr. Fauntleroy, in his loud, blustering tones. "To think that he should die off like this, and nobody know of it!"

"I never knew he was ill," said the squire. "I should, of course, have come over if I had."

"Oh, he has been ill—that is to say, ailing—a good month now," returned the lawyer. "And when these aged healthy men begin to droop, their life is not worth much."

"Well, what's to be done now?" cried Squire Carr.

"Nothing of consequence until we hear from the son. I sent down to the carpenter this morning

about the shell, but I shall do nothing more until we hear from Mr. Carr in Holland. I wrote a line to him the moment I heard what had happened, and was in time to get it off by the day mail. He will come over, there's no doubt."

"You knew his address, then?" cried Valentine. It was the first word he had spoken, and he had stood, with his little mean figure, rather behind his father, and his little mean light eyes furtively scanning the lawyer's countenance.

"I believe I know it," replied Mr. Fauntleroy. "There has been an address in our books as long as I have had anything to do with the office, 'Robert Carr, Messrs. something (I forget the name), Rotterdam.' I once asked Mr. Carr if it was his son's correct address, and he said it was, for all he knew. That is the address I have written to."

"Are you sure that the old man did not make a will?" asked the squire, alluding to his relative, Marmaduke.

"I am sure that I never made one for him," returned Mr. Fauntleroy. "Will? no, not he! The very mention of the subject used to anger him? Where was the use of his making a will, he said. His son would inherit just as well without a will as with one: he was heir-at-law."

Squire Carr's covetous heart gave vent to a

resentful sigh. They were the very self-same words that Mr. Carr had used to him so many years ago, on the same topic. That old Marmaduke had *not* made a will, he felt as certain as that he should go to his own bed that night, but he could not help harping upon the contrary hope. As to Valentine, he could almost have found in his heart to forge one, had such doings not been unfashionable.

"Well, I must say Marmaduke might have remembered that he had other relatives besides that runagate son," grumbled the squire. "Had he been mine, I'd have cut him off with a shilling."

"Not a bit on't, Carr," laughed the lawyer, in his coarse way. "You'll not leave your chattels away from your own progeny; not even from the roving sheep, Ben."

Now it was a singular coincidence, amid the many small coincidences of this history, that Marmaduke Carr's son Robert should die at the same time as his father. But so it was. The exile of many, many years died without ever having seen his father, or sought for a word of reconciliation with him: he had died suddenly in a fit, *before* his father, but not above an hour or two; and without seeing one of his three children, for all were away from home when it occurred.

In reply to Mr. Fauntleroy's letter there arrived a short note, written by a lady who signed herself

Emma Carr, neé D'Estival." The language was English, and good English, too; but the handwriting was unmistakably French. In acknowledging the receipt of Mr. Fauntleroy's letter, it stated that "her husband" was from home; and it gave the information that Mr. Carr was dead—had died after a few hours' illness.

Nothing could exceed the commotion that this news excited at Squire Carr's. Robert Carr dead! then they were the heirs-at-law. They beset the office of Mr. Fauntleroy; they took the conduct of affairs into their own hands; they ordered the funeral, and they fixed the day of interment. Not by any means a remote day; scarcely decently so, according to English notions of keeping the dead. It was hot weather, Valentine remarked; and that was true: but Westerbury said they wanted to get the poor old man under ground that they might ransack the house, and see what valuables were in it. Mr. Fauntleroy was rather taken aback at these proceedings; at the summary wrestling of affairs out of *his* hands; and he had promised himself some nice little pickings out of all this, the funeral and the acting for Robert Carr, and one thing or another; but he did not see his way clear to hinder it. If Robert Carr was dead, and the old man had left no will, Squire Carr was undoubtedly the heir-at-law.

It was not, however, to be quite smooth sailing. On their return home from the funeral—and the only stranger invited to it was Mr. Arkell, he and Mr. Fauntleroy, with the two Carrs forming the mourners — Mr. Fauntleroy produced from his pocket a letter which he had received that morning. It was from the Reverend Robert Carr, the son of the deceased gentleman in Holland, requesting Mr. Fauntleroy to take all necessary arrangements upon himself for the interment of old Mr. Carr, his grandfather, and regretting that he was prevented journeying to attend it, in consequence of the melancholy circumstances already known to Mr. Fauntleroy. It desired that the style of the funeral should be handsome, in accordance with the fortune and position of the deceased. It was signed Robert Carr.

"Robert *Carr*!" contemptuously ejaculated the squire. "What a fool he must be to write in that strain to us!"

Mr. Fauntleroy chuckled over the letter; especially over that part of it ordering a suitable funeral. In his opinion, and in the opinion of Westerbury generally, the funeral of Mr. Carr had *not* been suitable. There were no mutes, no pall-bearers, no superfluous plumes, no anything: none but a mean-minded man would have ordered such a one.

Mr. Fauntleroy wrote back to the Reverend

Robert Carr. He gave him a statement of the case in a dry, lawyery sort of way, and told him that Squire Carr being, under the apparent circumstances, heir-at-law, had taken possession of the affairs and property. This elicited a most indignant reply from Robert Carr. There could not be the slightest doubt that his father and mother were married, he said, and he should be in Westerbury as speedily as he could to maintain his own rights.

"Does he think he can impose upon us, this young fellow of a parson?" cried Squire Carr, when the letter was shown him. "He will be for making out next that his mother, that Hughes girl, was my cousin's wife. Let him prove it. Old birds are not caught with chaff."

And Squire Carr took out letters of administration.

CHAPTER VII.

ROBERT CARR'S VISIT.

Mrs. Arkell sat in her drawing-room with a visitor. She was listening to what struck her as being the very strangest tale she had ever heard or dreamt of. The Reverend Mr. Prattleton, who had reached home the previous night, had come this afternoon to tell her of the disappearance of Mr. Dundyke.

"Your sister wished me to give you the particulars as soon as I got home," he observed. "There was little, if any, acquaintance between you and Mr. Dundyke," she said, "but she felt sure you would feel concern for him, now he was dead, and would like to hear the details. It is a sad thing; I may say an awful thing."

"I never heard of such a thing," exclaimed Mrs. Arkell, forgetting her contempt for the Dundykes in the moment's interest. "It appears incredible that such a thing could happen. Do you really think he was murdered, Mr. Prattleton?"

"No, no; I don't think that," said the minor canon. "Of course there is the possibility; but I incline to the belief that he must have fallen into the lake, leaving his pocket-book on the shore. Indeed, I feel convinced of it, and I think Mrs. Dundyke felt so at last. In the first uncertainty and suspense, I hardly know what horrible things she did not fancy."

"But surely all proper search was made for him!"

"Of course it was. I am not sure that the police took so much interest in it, all of us being foreigners, and temporary sojourners in the town, as they would have done if a native had been missing. It was with difficulty they were persuaded to take a serious view of the case. The gentleman had only gone off somewhere else, they thought, without telling his wife. However, they did their best to find traces of him; but it proved useless."

"What could have taken them to Geneva?" exclaimed Mrs. Arkell.

"A desire for change and recreation, I suppose. The same that took me—that takes us all."

"But—— those common working-people don't require change," had been on Mrs. Arkell's tongue; but she altered the words. Mrs. Dundyke *was* her sister, and unfortunately she could not deny it. "But —— Geneva was very far to go."

"Not very, in these days of travelling. It is

twenty years, Mrs. Arkell, since I was on the continent, and one seems to get about there ten times as quick as formerly. It's true I took the rail this time as much as I could; the Dundykes, on the contrary, preferred the old diligences, wherever they were to be had."

"Did you see Mr. Dundyke?"

"No," said the minor canon. "He had disappeared—is it not a strangely sounding word?—before we reached Geneva."

"What a mercy that it was not after it!" thought Mrs. Arkell, remembering the graces of manner of the ill-fated common-councilman. "Mrs. Dundyke has returned home, you say?"

"Oh, yes. When all hope was gone, we left Geneva. She went on home direct, but we stayed in Paris. I very much wished to call upon her as we came through London, but we had remained beyond our time, and I could not. I assure you, Mrs. Arkell, I do not know when I have met with anyone that so won on my regard and on Mary's, as your sister."

Mrs. Arkell raised her eyes in pure surprise. *Her* sister, humble Betsey Dundyke, win upon anybody's regard! It struck her that the clergyman must be saying it out of some notion of politeness; he could surely never mean it. The fact was, Mrs. Arkell had so long been accustomed

to regard her sister in a disparaging point of view, that she could not look upon her in any other light.

"She was always a poor, weak sort of girl, between ourselves, Mr. Prattleton. Otherwise you know she never could have made such a marriage. The man was most inferior; dreadfully inferior."

"Indeed! Then I think he must have got on well," said Mr. Prattleton. "He was to have been one of the sheriffs, I believe, next year."

Mrs. Arkell superciliously drew down her still pretty lips. "A great many of those civic London people are quite inferior tradesmen," she said; "at least I have heard so. I only hope poor Betsey has enough left to keep her from want. When these business people die, it often happens that all they have dies with them, and—oh, William, Mr. Prattleton has brought us the strangest news! Mr. Dundyke—Betsey's husband, you know—is either murdered or drowned."

She had broken off thus on the entrance of her husband. Mr. Arkell, as he shook hands with the clergyman, listened in amazement little less great than his wife's, and asked question upon question, greatly interested. You see there was sufficient—what shall I say?—uncertainty, about the matter still, to make them look upon it more as an uncleared-up mystery, than a certain tragedy, and perhaps the chief feeling excited in all minds when

they first heard it, was that of marvel. In the midst of Mr. Prattleton's explanations, the college clock struck three, and the bell rang out for afternoon service. It was the minor canon's signal.

"I must go," he said, as he rose; "it is my week for chanting. Mr. Wilberforce took the duty for me the two first days. I did intend to get home on Saturday last, but somehow the time slipped on."

Mr. Arkell was going into the town, and he walked with Mr. Prattleton as far as the large cathedral gates; for the minor canon went round to the front way that afternoon, as it lay in the road for Mr. Arkell. Lounging about in an idle mood, now against the contiguous railings, now against a post of the great doorway, in a manner not often seen at cathedral doors, and not altogether appropriate to them, was a rather tall, bilious-looking young man, with fair hair. He did not see them; his head was turned the other way.

"Can't you find anything better to do, George?"

The words came from the clergyman, and the young man turned with a start. It was George Prattleton, the half-brother of the minor canon, but very, very much younger. Mr. George held a good civil appointment in India, but he was now home on sick leave, and his days were eaten up with *ennui*. He made the Rev. Mr. Prattleton's his home, who good-naturedly allowed him to do

it; but he was inclined to be what the world calls fast, and, except at the intervals (somewhat rare ones) when he had plenty of money in his pocket, he felt that the world was a wearisome sort of place, of no good to anybody. A good-natured, inoffensive young fellow on the whole; free from actual vice; but extravagant, incorrigibly lazy, and easily imposed upon. He generally called his brother "Mr. Prattleton." The difference in their ages justified it, and they had not been brought up together.

"I was deliberating whether I should go in to service this afternoon," said George—a sort of excuse for lounging against the door-post, as he shook hands with Mr. Arkell.

"By way of passing away the time!" cried the clergyman, some covert reproof in his tone.

"Well—yes," returned George, who was by no means unwilling to confess to his shortcomings. "It *is* a bore, having nothing to do."

"When you first came home you brought a cart-load of books with you, red-hot upon studying Hindustanée. I wonder how many times you have opened them!"

Mr. Prattleton passed into the cathedral as he spoke. It was time he did, for the bell had been going twelve minutes. George pulled a rueful face as he thought of his Hindustanée.

"I tried it for six whole days after I came home, Mr. Arkell—I give you my word I did; but I couldn't get on at all by myself, and there is not a master to be had in the town. I shall set to it in right earnest before I go out again."

Mr. Arkell laughed. He rather liked the good-natured young man, and Travice he knew was fond of him.

"But, George, you should remember one thing," he said: "idleness does not get a man on in the world. You have a fine career before you out yonder, if you only take the trouble to secure it."

"I know that, Mr. Arkell; and I assure you not a fellow in all the three presidencies is steadier than I am, or works harder than I do, when I am there. It is only here, where I have no work before me, that I get into this dawdling way."

Mr. Arkell left him, passed out of the cathedral inclosure, and continued his way up the town. George Prattleton remained where he was, wondering what on earth he could do with himself. It was too late to go in to service, for the bell had ceased, the organ was pealing out, and he caught a glimpse, across the great body of the cathedral, of the white surplices of the dean and two of the chapter, as they whisked in at the cloister door. George Prattleton believed time must be given to mortals as a punishment for their sins. He had

not a sixpence in his pocket; he owed so much at the billiard-rooms that he did not like to show his face there; he was in debt to all the tobacconists of the place; he had borrowed money from private friends; and altogether he rather wished for an earthquake, or something of that light nature, by way of a diversion to the general stagnation of the sultry afternoon.

Mr. Arkell meanwhile reached the house of lawyer Fauntleroy, for that was the place he was bound for. Mr. Fauntleroy was not his solicitor, but he had a question to ask him on a matter unconnected with professional business. As he was turning out of the office again, he nearly ran against a stranger in deep mourning, who was looking up, as though he wanted to find the number of the house. He was a slight, delicate-looking young man; and it instantly struck Mr. Arkell that he had seen his face before, or one like it.

"I beg your pardon," said the stranger, taking his hat more completely off than an Englishman generally does to one of his own sex, "can you tell me whether this is Mr. Fauntleroy's?"

"It is Mr. Fauntleroy's. I think—I think you are the son of Robert Carr!" impulsively cried Mr. Arkell, as the resemblance to the exiled and now dead friend of his boyhood flashed across his memory.

It was no other. The Reverend Robert Carr had hastened to Westerbury as soon as family arrangements and his own health permitted him. A few moments of conversation, and Mr. Arkell turned back with him to introduce him to Lawyer Fauntleroy, thinking at the same time that he had rarely seen anyone look so thin, so pale, so shadowy as Robert Carr.

It was a handsome house, this of Lawyer Fauntleroy's—and if you object to the term "Lawyer Fauntleroy," as old-fashioned, you must not blame me for using it. Westerbury rarely called him anything else; does not call him anything else now, if it has occasion to recal him or his doings. The offices were on either side of the door, as you entered; Mr. Fauntleroy's private room, a large, well fitted-up apartment, being on the right; a small ante-room led to it, generally the sanctum of the managing clerk.

Mr. Fauntleroy was at leisure, and the whole affair in all its details, past and present, was related to Robert Carr. Mr. Arkell remained also. It was not a pleasant office to have to seek to convince this young man of his own illegitimacy, never a doubt of which had arisen in his mind.

"My mother not married!" he repeated, a streak of suspicious crimson—suspicious when taken in conjunction with that hacking cough, those

shadowy hands—"indeed you would not entertain such a thought had you known her. She was, I believe, of inferior family, but in herself she was a lady, and her children had cause to love and bless her. Not married! Why, are you aware, Mr. Fauntleroy, that my father was a partner in one of the first merchant's houses in Rotterdam, and that my mother held her own, and was visited, and respected as few are, so long as she lived?"

Lawyer Fauntleroy shook his head. He was a man who took practical views of most things, utterly scorning theoretical ones.

"I don't doubt your word, Mr. Carr, that your mother was a most estimable lady; I remember her myself, an uncommon pretty girl; but that does not prove that she was married."

Mr. Carr's eyes flashed. "Not prove it! Do you think, being what I tell you she was, a good, religious woman, that she would have lived with my father unless they had been married?"

"I have known such cases," cried the lawyer, with his dry practicalness, if there is such a word. "One of the first men in this city—if you except the clergy and that set—Haughton was his name, and plenty of money he had, and lived in style, as Mr. Arkell here can tell you, his sons sticking themselves above everybody, his wife and daughters setting the fashions—well, Mr. Carr, when he

died, it was discovered that his wife was not his wife; that his children were nothing in the eyes of the law. Westerbury was electrified, I can tell you, and bestows hard names upon old Haughton to this day, for having so imposed upon them."

"You should not put such a case on a parallel with ours," said the young clergyman, in pained reproof.

"But, my good sir, it *is* on a parallel; so far, at all events. I tell you this family were looked upon as superior, as everything that was moral; not a word could be urged against the wife (as we'll call her for the argument's sake); she was respected and visited; and not until old Haughton died, and his will came to be read, did the secret ooze out. He left his money to them, but he could not leave it in the usual straightforward way. By the way," added the lawyer briskly, as a thought struck him; "in what manner was your father's will worded? How was your mother styled in it?"

"You forget that my mother has been dead for some time. The will was made only two years ago. It was a perfectly legally-drawn-up will, according to the Dutch laws; there can be no doubt of that."

"Do you remember how you are described in it, and your brothers and sisters?" persisted Mr. Fauntleroy.

"I have but one brother and one sister; we are described in what I suppose is the usual manner, by our Christian names, Robert, Thomas, and Mary Augusta, the sons and daughter of Robert Carr. It is something to that effect; I did not take particular notice of the wording."

"I wonder what the law is, over there, with regard to legitimacy?" mused Mr. Fauntleroy, his eyes seeing an imaginary Holland in the distance. "But, Mr. Carr, this is waste of time," he added, rousing himself; "the plain case round which the question will revolve, is not so much whether your father and mother were married, as whether it can be *proved* that they were. The law, in a case like this, requires proof actual—and very right that it should."

"I suppose there will not be the slightest difficulty in proving it," said Robert Carr, resenting the very suggestion.

"Can *you* prove it? Do you know where it took place?"

The young man shook his head. "I never heard where. It can be readily found out."

"Did you ever question your father upon the point?"

"No; it was not likely I should, seeing that my attention was never drawn to any doubt of the sort."

"Well, Westerbury has never entertained any doubt the other way," said the lawyer. "It is not agreeable to say these things to your face, Mr. Carr; but there's no help for it; and the sooner the question is set at rest for you, one way or the other, the better. I should not think there's a single person living still in Westerbury, who recollects the circumstances as they took place, that would believe your father married Miss Hughes after she went away with him."

"It is probable they were married before they did go away," spoke Robert Carr, hating more than he liked to show the being compelled to this discussion.

"That, I can answer for, they were not. When they left here she was Martha Ann Hughes."

"Mr. Fauntleroy is right so far," interposed Mr. Arkell. "They were not married when they left Westerbury: on that point there can be no mistake. The question that remains is, were they married subsequent to it?"

"They must have been," said Robert Carr.

"But there is no must in the case," dissented the lawyer. "The probabilities are that they were not: the belief is such."

"I do not see why you should persistently seek to cast this opprobrium on my father and mother, Mr. Fauntleroy!" exclaimed Robert Carr, his hollow face lighting up with reproach.

"Bless you, my good sir, I don't seek to cast it," said the lawyer, good-humouredly. "Facts are facts. If you can prove that Robert Carr married Miss Hughes, and your own legal birth with it, you will take the property; but if you can't prove it, Squire Carr must keep possession, and things will remain as they are. Where's the use of shutting our eyes to the truth?"

"There can be no doubt whatever of the marriage. I am sure of it; I would stake all my hopes upon it here and—I was going to say—hereafter."

"But you so speak only according to your belief, sir? You have no shadow of proof."

"True; but——"

"Just so," interrupted Mr. Fauntleroy, in his decisive and rather overbearing manner. "All the proofs lie on the other side—negative proofs, at any rate. They went away together without being married; that is certain—and, by the way, they hoaxed my friend here, William Arkell, into helping them off; and I believe his father never forgave him for it. Neither were there wanting subsequent proofs—negative ones, perhaps, as I say—that they remained unmarried; at any rate, for some years. Rely upon one thing, Mr. Robert Carr: that old Marmaduke, just dead, would have left his money away from his son unless he had

been thoroughly certain that no marriage took place. He had sworn to disinherit his son if he married Miss Hughes, and he was a man to keep his word."

"Excuse me," said Robert Carr: "you do not perceive that this very fact may have been the motive that induced my father to keep his marriage a secret."

"I perceive it very well. But it is a great deal more probable that there never was a marriage. Weigh all the circumstances well, Mr. Carr; without prejudice: though, of course, it is difficult for you to do so. Over and over again your father was heard to say that he had no intention of marrying the girl——"

"You forget that you are speaking to me of my mother," interrupted Robert Carr.

"Well, yes, I did," acknowledged the lawyer. "It is difficult to speak to a son upon these things; but I think, Mr. Carr, you had better hear them. Mr. Arkell there, who was your father's intimate acquaintance, can testify how positively he disclaimed, even to him, any intention of marriage. Next came the——"

"Allow me," interposed the clergyman, his haughty tone bespeaking how painful all this was to him. "I presume no suspicion was cast upon my mother's name while she was in Westerbury?"

"Not a breath of it. Blame was cast, though, on her and her sisters for allowing the visits of Robert Carr: as is usual in all cases where there is much disparity in the social standing of the parties. Next came the elopement, I was about to say. They went direct to London, where they stayed together——"

"The marriage must have taken place there," again interrupted Robert Carr.

"I believe not," said Mr. Fauntleroy, dryly. "Marmaduke Carr took care to acquaint himself with particulars, and it was ascertained that they did not remain in London long enough to allow of it. The law, more particular then than it is now, required a residence of three weeks in a place, before a marriage could be solemnized, and they left for Holland ere the expiration of a fortnight. It was our house—my father then being its head—which sought out these particulars for old Marmaduke. No; rely upon it there was no marriage in London."

His tone plainly said, "Rely upon it there was no marriage, there or elsewhere." Mr. Carr was about to speak, but the lawyer raised his hand and continued.

"Some little time after they had settled in Rotterdam, John Carr—Squire Carr now—went over and saw them. There's no doubt his visit

was a fishing one, hoping to find out that a marriage *had* taken place; for in that case, Marmaduke Carr would have wanted another heir than his son. I am sure that John, close-fisted as he was known to be, would have given a hundred pounds out of his pocket to be able to come back and report that they were married; but he could not. He was obliged to confess not only that his cousin and Miss Hughes were not married, but that Robert had told him he never should marry her. And, indeed, it was hardly to be supposed that he would then."

"But——"

"A moment yet, if you please, Mr. Carr. Some considerable time after this, and when I think there was one child born—which must have been you, sir—Mr. Carr got to see a letter written by Martha Ann Hughes to her sister Mary. I think he got the sight of it through you, Mr. Arkell?"

"Through my father. Mary Hughes was at work at our house, and Tring, our maid, brought the letter on the sly to my mother. My father, I remember, said he should like to show it to Marmaduke Carr; and he did so."

"Ay. Well, Mr. Carr, nothing could have been plainer than that letter. Mary Ann Hughes acknowledged that she had no hope of Robert's marrying her; but he was kind to her, she said,

and she was as happy as anyone well could be under her unfortunate circumstances. Indeed, I fear you have no room for hope."

"Where is that letter?" asked the clergyman.

"It's impossible to say. Destroyed most likely long ago. None of your mother's family are remaining in Westerbury."

"Are they all dead?"

"Dead or dispersed. The brother went off to America or somewhere; and the second sister, Mary, died: it was said she grieved a great deal about her sister, your mother. The eldest sister married a young man of the name of Pycroft, and they also emigrated. Nothing has been heard of any of them for years."

"You must permit me to maintain my own opinion, Mr. Fauntleroy," pursued Robert Carr; "and I shall certainly not allow anyone to interfere with my grandfather's property. If the other branch of the family—Squire Carr and his sons—wish to put forth any pretensions to it, they must first prove their right."

Mr. Fauntleroy laughed. He was amused at the clergyman's idea of law.

"The proof lies with you, Mr. Carr," he said; "and not with them. They cannot prove a negative, you know; and they say that no marriage took place. It is for you to prove that it

did. Failing that proof, the property will be theirs."

"And meanwhile? While we are searching for the proof?" questioned Robert Carr, after a pause.

"Meanwhile they retain possession. I understand that Mrs. Lewis has already come over and taken up her abode in the house."

"Who is Mrs. Lewis?" asked the clergyman.

"Squire Carr's widowed daughter. She has been living at home since her husband died. I was told this morning that she had come to the house with the intention of remaining."

Mr. Fauntleroy's information was correct. Mrs. Lewis *had* come to Marmaduke Carr's house, and was fully resolved to stop in it, fate and the squire permitting. Mr. Lewis had died about a year before, and left her not so well off as she could have wished. She had a competency; but she had not riches. She broke up her household in the Grounds, and went on a long visit to her father's, to save housekeeping temporarily; leaving her two boys, who were on the foundation of the college school, as boarders at the house of Mr. Wilberforce.

CHAPTER VIII.

GOING OVER TO SQUIRE CARR'S.

Mr. Arkell put his arm within Robert Carr's, as they walked away together. It would be difficult to express how very much he felt for this young man. His father's fault was not his, and Mr. Arkell, at least, would not be one to visit it upon him. For a few yards their steps were taken in silence; but the clergyman spoke at last, his eye dilating, his voice vehement.

"If they had only known my mother as I knew her, they would see how improbable is this tale that they are telling! I do not care what their suspicions are, what their want of proof; I *know* that my mother was my father's wife."

"Indeed I hope it will prove so," said Mr. Arkell, rather at a loss what else to say.

"She was modest, gentle, good, refined; she was respected as few are respected. There never was a trace of shame upon her brow. Could her children have been trained as she trained hers, if—

if—I can hardly trust myself to speak of this. It is a cruel calumny."

Perhaps so. But, looking at it in its best light; allowing that they were really married; the calumny was alone the fault of this young man's father. If he could have removed the stigma, he should have done it. Did this poor young man begin to think so? Did unwilling doubts arise, even to him? Scarcely, yet. But the lines grew hard in his face as they walked along, and his troubled eyes looked out straight before him into space, seeing nothing.

"I wish you would give me the whole history of the past yourself, Mr. Arkell, now that I can listen quietly. I was hardly in a state to pay attention just now; somehow I distrusted that old lawyer."

"You need not have done that. He was your grandfather's man of business; and, though a little rough, he is sufficiently honest."

"Is he not acting for Squire Carr?"

"I think not. I am sure not."

"Will you give me the history of the past, quietly? as correctly as you can remember it."

Mr. Arkell did so; telling, with a half laugh, the ruse Robert Carr had exercised in getting his father's carriage to take them away, and the hot water he, William, got into in consequence. He

told the whole affair from its earliest beginning to its ending, concealing nothing; he mentioned how Mary Hughes had happened to be at work at his mother's house that day; and the dreadful distresss she experienced, as soon as the matter was made known to her; he even told how severe in its judgment on the fugitives was Westerbury.

"And were *you* severe upon them also?" asked Robert Carr.

"Just at first. That is, I believed the worst. But afterwards my opinion changed, and I thought it most likely that Robert married her in London. I thought that for some time. In fact, until I saw the letter that you heard Mr. Fauntleroy speak of, as having been written by your mother to her sister Mary."

"You saw that letter yourself, then?"

"Yes, my father showed it to me. Not in any gossiping spirit, but as a convincing proof that the opinion I had held was wrong, and his was right. He had been very greatly vexed at the whole affair, and would never listen to me when I said I hoped and thought they were married. It was, as Mr. Fauntleroy observed, a plain, convincing letter; and from the moment I saw it, I felt sure that there had been no marriage, and would be none. I am so grieved to tell you this, my

dear young friend; but I might not be doing my duty if I were to suppress it."

Robert Carr's face turned a shade paler.

"I see exactly how it is," he said: "that it is next to impossible for you, or anyone else, to believe there was a marriage; all the circumstances telling against it. Nevertheless, I declare to you, Mr. Arkell, on my sacred word as a clergyman, that I am as certain a marriage did take place, as that there is a heaven above us."

Mr. Arkell did not think so, and there ensued a pause.

"Your father died rather suddenly, I believe," he said to Robert Carr.

"Very suddenly. He was taken with a sort of fit; I really cannot tell you its exact nature, for the medical men differed, but I suppose it was apoplexy. They agreed in one thing, that there was no hope from the first; and he never recovered consciousness. I was in London when they telegraphed to me, but when I got home he had been for some hours dead."

"I will send to the hotel for your portmanteau," said Mr. Arkell; "you must be our guest while you stay. My son will be delighted. He is about your own age."

"Thank you, no; you are very kind, but I would rather be alone just now," was Robert Carr's

answer. "This is not a pleasant visit for me, and I am in poor health, besides. I shall not stay here long; I must enter upon a search for the register of the marriage. But I should like to pay a visit to the Carr's before I leave, and I am too fatigued to go back to-day."

"To pay a visit to the Carr's?" Mr. Arkell echoed.

"Yes. Why should I not? They are my relatives, and I do not see that there need be ill blood between us. As to the property, they have no real right to it whatever, and I hope I shall speedily produce proof that it is mine, and so put an end to any heartburning. I suppose," he added, reverting to the one subject, "that you are quite sure the marriage did not take place before they left Westerbury?"

"You may put that idea entirely aside," replied Mr. Arkell. "There's no doubt that their going away was in consequence of a bitter quarrel Robert had with his father; that it was unpremeditated until the night previous to their departure. In Westerbury they were not married, could not have been; but perhaps they were in London. It is true, I believe, they did not stay there anything like three weeks—and you heard what Mr. Fauntleroy said; but I suppose it is possible to evade the law, which exacts a residence of that length of

time in a place, before the ceremony can be performed."

"Yes, there's no doubt they were married in London," concluded Robert Carr. "I must ascertain what parish they stayed in there; and the rest will be easy."

Not another word was said. Robert Carr walked on in silence, and Mr. Arkell did not interrupt it. Mr. Arkell took him into his house. In the dining-room, the old familiar room you have so often seen, sat a lady, languidly looking over a parcel of books just come in. By her side, leaning over her chair, grasping the books more eagerly than she, the stranger saw a young man of about his own age—tall, slender, gentlemanly—with a face of peculiar refinement, and a sweet smile.

"Now, I wonder what they mean by their negligence? The two books I ordered are not here. I wish *they* knew what it was to have these fine starry nights, and be without a book of reference; they——"

"Travice," interrupted Mr. Arkell, "I have brought you a visitor, the son of a once close friend of mine. My wife, Mrs. Arkell. Charlotte, this is Mr. Robert Carr, Mr. Carr's grandson."

Mrs. Arkell turned and received him with a curtsey and a dubious look. Always inclined to judge on the uncharitable side, she had had nothing

but indifferent scorn to cast to the rumour that Robert Carr's children were going to lay claim to the property, just as she had scorned Robert Carr himself in the old days. She knew that this must be one of the children.

Travice went up at once and shook him warmly by the hand, his pleasant face smiling its own welcome. "I have often heard my father speak of yours," he said; "I am so pleased to see you."

Very little was said in the presence of Mrs. Arkell, touching the business that had brought Robert Carr to Westerbury; but one subject led to another, and Robert Carr told, as one of the strange occurrences of the world, that which had made so strong an impression on himself—the story of the disappearance of Mr. Dundyke. He told it as to strangers; and not, until he had related his own meeting with them at Grenoble, and his visit to Mrs. Dundyke on the night of her return to London, did he find that Mrs. Arkell was her sister. It was Travice Arkell's impetuosity that brought it out then; Mrs. Arkell had been better pleased that it should remain a secret.

"We have heard it all," said Travice; "and Mrs. Dundyke is my aunt and my godmother. She and my mother are sisters."

"I was not aware of it," said Robert Carr. "Is it not a strange tale?"

"Strange!" repeated Travice, "I never heard of anything half so strange. I have been waylaying Mr. Prattleton as he came out of college, wanting to hear more than my mother could tell me. I wish I had been at Geneva!"

"So do I," said Robert Carr.

Robert Carr remained to dinner. He still expressed a wish to make himself known to his relatives, the Carrs; and Mr. Arkell offered to drive him to Eckford on the following morning. A railway now went near the place; but the seven miles' drive was pleasanter than the ten of rail, and Squire Carr's house was a good mile and a half from the Eckford station. So it was arranged.

"Travice," said Mr. Arkell, as Robert Carr took his departure, "I was glad to see your reception of this gentleman. Be to him a *friend* in any way that you can. It may be, that he will not find too many of them in Westerbury."

Mrs. Arkell tossed her head. "I am rather surprised that you should bring him here, and introduce him on this familiar footing. The past history of the father is not a passport for the son. I should not have cared so much had Charlotte and Sophy been away."

"Charlotte and Sophy! He'll not poison them. What are you thinking of, Charlotte? He has been reared a gentleman; he is a clergyman of the

Church of England. Whatever may have been the truth of the past, *he* is not to blame for it."

Travice Arkell was full of sympathy. "How ill he looks!" he exclaimed; "though he seems to think nothing of it, and says it is the result of a hurt. Is it not curious that he should have met with Mrs. Dundyke? He says his mother was in some way related to the Dundykes."

"There, that will do, Travice," interposed Mrs. Arkell. "I shall dream of that Geneva lake to-night, and of seeing dead men in it. But, William," she added in a lower tone to her husband, "what a misfortune it will be for Betsey, should she have nothing left to live upon! She would have to go out as a housekeeper, or something of that sort."

Squire Carr's residence was a low, rambling, red-brick building, with a quantity of outhouses lying around it, and an avenue of oaks leading almost up to the low-porched entrance door. Pacing before this porch, a clay pipe in his mouth, and his dark hair uncovered to the September sun, was Benjamin Carr. He seemed in a moody study, from which the sound of wheels aroused him, and he saw Mr. Arkell driving up in his open carriage, a stranger sitting with him, and the groom in the back seat. Benjamin Carr wore a short velveteen shooting-coat—it set off his tall form to advan-

tage ; and Robert Carr thought what a fine man he was.

"Why, Benjamin, I did not know you were at home."

"I got here a day or two ago," returned Benjamin, putting aside his pipe, and shaking hands with Mr. Arkell. "The squire's slice of luck brought me. One of the girls wrote me word of it ; so I've come to see whether I can't drop in for a few of the pickings."

It was an awkward answer, considering that Robert Carr was listening; perhaps he did not understand it. Mr. Arkell made rather a bustle of getting out, and of standing aside for Robert, telling his groom to take the horse round to the stables. "Is your father in, Benjamin?" he asked.

"For all I know. I have seen none of them since breakfast. Valentine's gone over to Eckford, I believe ; but—here's the squire."

The squire, attracted by the sounds of the arrival, was peeping forth from the house door. He wore a shabby old coat, and his poor shrunken clothes looked altogether too small even for his miserable little figure. Robert Carr was struck with the contrast to his fine son.

A word or two of explanation from Mr. Arkell, delivered in a low tone, a prolonged, astonished stare from Benjamin, and the squire, in a bewilder-

ment of surprise, was shaking hands with Robert Carr.

"It is the first visit I have made to my father's native place, and though unpleasant circumstances have brought me, I do not see that they need be any reason for my shunning my relatives; I dare say we only wish, on both sides, all that is fair and right," began Robert Carr. "I expressed a wish to come and see you, sir, and Mr. Arkell kindly offered to drive me over."

Had the squire followed his first impulse, he might possibly have ordered Mr. Robert Carr off his premises again; for he could only look upon him as a secret enemy, who had very nearly wrested from him a brave inheritance. But his policy throughout life had been to conciliate, no matter at what expense of hypocrisy. It was the safest course, he held; and he pursued it now. Besides, if there was one man that the squire did not care to stand altogether a sneak before, it was William Arkell with his well-known uprightness.

The squire led the way to his study, turning over in his mind what secret end Robert Carr could hope to answer by coming over and spying into the enemy's quarters. That he had come as a spy, or in some character as base, it was out of the squire's nature to do other than believe. Benjamin followed, in a state of wonder. As they went along the stone

passage, Robert Carr caught sight of some pretty girls peeping here and there like scared pheasants; but the squire raised his finger meaningly, and they scuttered away.

The visit was not a pleasant one, after all; and perhaps it was a mistake to have made it. The restraint was too visibly evident. Robert himself spoke of the inheritance—spoke openly, as one honourable, or we may as well say, indifferent, man would discuss it with another. There could be no possible doubt that his father and mother were married, he said; and he hoped the property of all sorts would be allowed to rest in abeyance until the fact was ascertained, which might be done in a week's time.

The squire was rather taken aback, especially at the easy, confident tone; not a boasting tone—one of quiet, calm surety. "Why, how do you think to ascertain it?" he asked.

"I shall search the registers of the London churches."

The squire burst into a laugh. Had Robert Carr told him he was going to search the moon, it could not have struck upon his ear as a more absurd proceeding. Squire Carr was as sure that there had been no marriage as that the sun was then shining on his visitor's head; he had been sure of it, to his cost, all these long years.

"Well," said he, "you'll do as you like, of course, but don't go to much expense over it."

"Why?"

"Because you will *never* find what you are looking for, and it's a sin to throw away good money. I asked your father myself whether he had been married to the girl in London, and he told me he had not, that he had never been inside a church in London in his life; he told me also that he never should marry her. He spoke on his honour, and therefore I know he spoke the truth."

There was an unpleasant silence. Robert Carr began to feel that the topic could not be pursued.

"Look here, Mr. Carr," resumed the squire, in his piping voice: "you, as a university man, must be in a degree a man of the world, and must know that what's fair for the goose is fair for the gander. Had Marmaduke Carr's son lived and come over here to take possession, he would have taken it, uninterfered with by us; it would have been his own, and we should have wished him joy. But he did not live, he died; he died, in the eyes of the law, childless, and I am the inheritor. As good tell me you lay claim to this house of mine here, as to the property I have just come into of my uncle Marmaduke's."

"You will not allow it to lie in abeyance for a while?"

"Most certainly not. Nobody else would: and you must be a very young man to ask it. I have the law on my side: you cannot in England act contrary to the law, Mr. Carr."

"Well, I daresay you *think* you are right," said Robert Carr in a tolerant spirit. "Let us drop the subject. I did not, I assure you, come here to enter upon it; I came to make acquaintance with you, my relatives, and to say, but in no spirit of anger or contention, that I intend to establish and maintain my rights. We need not be enemies, or speak as such."

"Very well," said the squire, "I'll ask you one thing, and then we'll drop it, as you say; and it was not I who began it, mind. How came you to think of advancing your claim to my uncle Marmaduke's property? What put it in your head?"

"I believe it to be my property—that I have succeeded to it, with my brother and sister, in consequence of the death of my father. You must understand, Squire Carr, it is only now, since this question arose, that I have heard there was any doubt cast upon our birth."

"I see. Robert kept it from you. He was a simpleton for his pains; and you must not mind my being plain enough to say it. Next to the wrong itself, the worst wrong that parents can

inflict is the keeping it a secret from their children. And now let us go to luncheon. I told them to lay it. Never mind about its being early: you shall not go back without first taking something to eat."

"If you go away without partaking of our bread and salt, we shall think you bear us malice," said Benjamin, courteously, as he walked on to the dining-room with the clergyman.

Mr. Arkell was following, but the squire laid his finger on his arm to detain him. "Don't let him do it," he whispered.

"Do what?" asked Mr. Arkell.

"All this searching of registers and stuff that he talks of. Mind! I am not speaking in a selfish spirit, as I might if I were afraid of it,"—and for once the squire's earnest tones, and eyes, raised full in Mr. Arkell's face, proved that he was really speaking truth. "I am sorry for the young man; he is evidently a gentleman, and he looks sickly; and his father has done an ill part by him in letting this come upon him as a blow. There's not the smallest probability that they were married; I know what Robert said to me, and I would stake my life that they were not. If he searches every register in the three kingdoms, he'll never find its record; and it is a pity he should spend his money, and his time, and his hopes over it. Don't let him do it."

"That he will do it, I am quite certain," was the reply of Mr. Arkell. "He seems perfectly to reverence the memory of his mother; and it is as much to vindicate her fame that he will make the search, as for the sake of the inheritance. Robert Carr was grievously to blame to let it come to this. He ought to have set the question at rest, one way or the other, before his death."

"The fact is, Robert overreached himself," said Squire Carr. "I can see it plainly. He did not marry the girl, because it would have been the means of forfeiting his father's property—for old Marmaduke would have kept his word. He wanted to come into that property, and then to have made a will and left it to these children, relying on their foreign birth and residence to keep always the fact of their illegitimacy from them. But he died suddenly, you see, before he had come into it, and therefore the property goes from them. Robert overreached himself."

Mr. Arkell nodded his head. His opinion coincided with Squire Carr's.

CHAPTER IX.

A STARTLED LUNCHEON-TABLE.

THE luncheon was laid in a low room, with a beam running across the ceiling; the walls, once bright with red flock paper and much gilding, were soiled and dull now, after the manner of a great many of our dining-rooms. Squire Carr took the head of the table. He apologised for the fare: cold veal, ham (which Benjamin, who sat at the foot of the table, carved), and salad. The squire's daughters did not appear at it. There were too many of them, he said to Robert; but Mrs. Lewis, who had just come over from Westerbury by the train, did. She was a big woman, with little eyes like the squire's, and a large face—the latter very red just now, through her mile-and-a-half walk in the sun from Eckford. She turned her back on the young clergyman when he said grace, as though he had no business there. Benjamin had whispered to her who he was, and the search of the marriage register books

that was in prospect; and Mrs. Lewis resented it visibly. She had no mind to give up that bijou of a house just entered upon. She believed she should have trouble enough with her father to keep it, without another opponent coming into the field.

"What brings you over to-day, Emma?" asked the squire of Mrs. Lewis, as the meal proceeded. "Anything turned up?"

A rather ambiguous question, the latter one, to uninitiated ears; but the squire had been burning to put it, and Mrs. Lewis understood. He looked covertly at her for a moment with his blinking eyes, and then dropped them again.

"I only came over to see Ben, papa," she answered. "The news reached me this morning that he had come home. I have not had time to do anything yet."

Now, the fact was, Squire Carr had placed his daughter, knowing her admirable ferreting propensities, in Marmaduke Carr's house for one sole purpose—that of visiting its every hole and corner. "There *may* be a will," the squire had said to himself, in his caution, several times since the death. "I don't think there is; I could stake a great deal that there is not, for Marmaduke was not likely to make one; but it's as well to be on the safe side, and such things have been heard of

as wills hid away in houses." And when the squire saw Mrs. Lewis, whom he had not expected that day, he began to fear that something of the sort had "turned up." The relief was great.

"Oh, to see Ben. You'll see enough of him, I ect, before he's off again."

"Are you going to make a long stay here, this time, Ben?" asked Mr. Arkell.

"Yes, I think I shall. Will you take some more ham, Emma?"

"Your name is the same as my wife's," observed the young clergyman, with a smile, as he passed Mrs. Lewis's plate for more ham: for it was Squire Carr's pleasure that servants did not wait at luncheon.

"Is it? It is a very ugly one," roughly replied Mrs. Lewis, who could not recover her equanimity in the presence of this gentleman. "I can't think how they came to give it me, for my part. I have a prejudice against the name 'Emma.' The woman bore it whom, of all the women I have known in the world, I most disliked."

"It was your mother's name, my dear," said the squire.

"And *I* think a charming name," said Robert Carr. "I am not sure but it was Emma D'Estival's name that first attracted me to her."

The squire looked up with a sort of start. He

remembered the letter written by "Emma Carr, *née* D'Estival." Of course! she was this young man's wife.

"You look young to have a wife," was all the squire said.

"You look, to me, as if you had no business with one at all," added Mrs. Lewis with blunt plainness. "Sickly men should be cautious how they marry, lest they leave their wives widows. I have been so left. I threw aside my widow's cap only last week."

Robert Carr explained to them what his hurt had been, and how his chest had suffered at times since. He was aware he looked unusually ill just now, he said; but he had looked just as much so about a year and a half before—had coughed also. He should get well now, he supposed, like he did then. For one thing, speaking of his present looks, this matter was harassing him a good deal, and there had been his father's sudden death.

"Oh, by the way, Mr. Arkell, let me ask you something," exclaimed Mrs. Lewis suddenly. "I have heard the strangest thing. That a gentleman, a Mr. Dundas, or some such name, had been drowned or murdered, or something, at Geneva; a relative of your wife's. What *is* the truth of it?"

"That is the truth, as far as we can learn it," replied Mr. Arkell. "It was Mr. Dundyke, the husband of Mrs. Arkell's sister. You saw her once,

I know, at my mother's house, a great many years ago; she was Miss Betsey Travice then——"

"But about the murder?" interrupted Mrs. Lewis. "*Was* he murdered? Roland ran home from Mr. Wilberforce's for a minute last night, and I heard it from him. I think he said the young Prattletons told him. I know he was quite up in arms about it. What is it?"

Mr. Arkell pointed to Robert Carr. "That gentleman can tell you better than I can," he said. "He heard the particulars from Mrs. Dundyke herself. I only heard them from Mr. Prattleton secondhand."

"I suppose you want me to tell the story, instead of yourself," said Robert Carr, with a glance and a smile at Mr. Arkell. "Mr. Prattleton was on the spot, and instituted the search, so *his* information cannot be secondhand."

They began it between them, but Mr. Arkell gradually ceased, and left it to Robert Carr. It appeared to take a singular hold on the squire's interest. He had just asked his son for more ham, but was too absorbed to send his plate for it. Ben held the slice between his knife and fork, and had to let it drop at last.

"Then he was not murdered!" exclaimed Mrs. Lewis. "It was only a case of drowning, after all!"

"Of drowning," assented Robert Carr. "At least that is the most probable supposition."

"It may rather be called at present a case of mysterious disappearance, as the sensational weekly papers would phrase it," interposed Mr. Arkell, speaking again. "Mrs. Dundyke at one time felt convinced that a murder had been committed, as Mr. Prattleton tells me, and afterwards modified her opinion. Now she feels her doubts renewed again."

"What a shocking thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Lewis. "And who does she think murdered him—if he was murdered?"

"The Mr. Hardcastle of whom mention has been made. Mrs. Dundyke has discovered that he was an impostor."

"Has she!" exclaimed Robert Carr.

"Mr. Prattleton heard from her by last evening's post, and he came in late, and showed me her letters," said Mr. Arkell. "This man, Hardcastle, had passed himself off as being a partner of the great Hard castle house in Leadenhall-street—a nephew of its head and chief—whereas he turns out to be entirely unknown to them."

"And she thinks he did the murder?" quickly cried Mrs. Lewis, who was possessed of all a woman's curiosity on such subjects.

"She thinks the suspicions look very dark

against him," said Mr. Arkell. "I confess I think the same."

"But I thought Mr. Carr, here, said she had completely exonerated this Mr. Hardcastle!" cried the squire. "Be quiet, Emma; you would let nobody speak but yourself, if you had your way."

"So I believe she did exonerate him," returned Mr. Arkell; "but in all cases the same facts wear so different an aspect, according to their attendant surroundings. When Mr. Hardcastle was supposed to *be* Mr. Hardcastle, one of the chief partners of the great East India house, the nephew of its many-years' chief, it was almost impossible to suppose that he *could* have committed the murder, however little trifling circumstances might seem to give point to the suspicion. But when we know that this man was not Mr. Hardcastle, but an impostor—probably a *chevalier d'industrie*, travelling about to see what prey he could bring down—those same trifling circumstances change into alarming facts, every one of which bears its own significance."

"I don't clearly understand what the facts were," said the squire. "He borrowed money, didn't he?"

"He borrowed money—twenty pounds; he would have borrowed a hundred, but Mr. Dundyke had it not with him. He, poor Mr. Dundyke, was utterly taken in by them from the first—never had a shadow

of suspicion that anything was wrong; Mrs. Dundyke, on the contrary, tells Mr. Prattleton that she had. She feels quite sure that their running account at the hotel, for which she knows they were pressed, was paid with that twenty pounds, or part of it; and she says they——"

"In saying 'they,' of whom do you speak besides Mr. Hardcastle?" asked the squire.

"Of his wife. And Mrs. Dundyke did not like *her*. But let us come to the day of the disappearance. On that morning, as they sat at breakfast, Mr. Dundyke told Mr. Hardcastle that he was about to leave; and that some money he had written for, notes for thirty pounds, had come that morning—were inclosed in two letters which Mr. Hardcastle saw him receive and put in his pocket. Mrs. Dundyke says that she shall never forget the strangely eager glance—something like a wolf's when it scents prey—that he cast on Mr. Dundyke at mention of the thirty pounds. Mr. Dundyke went out alone, and hired a boat, as you have heard; and they afterwards saw him on the lake bearing away to the spot where he landed; Mr. Hardcastle saw him, and then walked away. Nothing more was seen of either of them until dinner-time, six o'clock, when Mr. Hardcastle returned; he came creeping into the house as if he wished to shun observation, travel-soiled, dusty, his face scratched,

his hand hurt—just as if he had been taking part in some severe struggle; and Mrs. Dundyke is positive that his face turned white when she rushed up and asked where her husband was."

"Did she suspect him then?"

"Oh dear no; not with the faintest suspicion. That same night she heard a fearful quarrel between Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle; weepings, lamentings, reproaches from Mrs. Hardcastle, ill-language from him; and twice she heard her husband's name mentioned. She told Mr. Prattleton subsequently that it was just as though the fact of the murder had been then disclosed to Mrs. Hardcastle, and she, the wife, had received it with a storm of horror and reproach. But the most suspicious circumstance was the pencil-case."

"What was that?" came the eager question from the squire and his daughter, for this had not yet been named.

"Well, what Mr. Prattleton tells me is this," said Mr. Arkell. "When Mr. Dundyke went out in the boat he had his pencil-case with him; Mrs. Dundyke saw him return it to his pocket-book the last thing before leaving the breakfast-room, and put the book in his pocket. It was the same pocket-book in which he had just placed the letters containing the bank-notes. The pencil-case was silver; it had been given to Mr. Dundyke by my

cousin Mildred, and had his initials upon it; Mrs. Dundyke says he never carried any other—had not, she feels convinced, any other with him that morning. After he had landed on the opposite side of the lake, he must have made use of this pencil to write the note, which note he sent back to the hotel by the boatmen. So that it appears to be a pretty certain fact that, whatever evil overtook Mr. Dundyke, this pencil must have been about him. Do you follow me?"

"Yes, yes," answered the squire, testily. He did not like the narrative to be interrupted by so much as a thread.

"Good. But this same pencil-case was subsequently found in Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle's room at the hotel."

"What!" exclaimed Benjamin Carr, looking up as if startled to sudden interest.

"The droll question is, how did it come there?" continued Mr. Arkell. "It was found in the room the Hardcastles had occupied at the hotel. They had left there some days; had gone on, they said, to Genoa. Mr. Prattleton's daughter was put in this room after their departure, and the silver pencil-case was picked up from behind the drawers. Mr. Prattleton and Mrs. Dundyke were in the chamber at the time, and the latter was dreadfully agitated; she quite startled him, he says, by

saying that Mr. Hardcastle must have murdered her husband."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Squire Carr. "I see. The pencil-case which was lost with Mr. Dundyke reappeared in their room! How very strange! I should have had the man apprehended."

"The hypothesis of course is, that Mr. Hardcastle had in some manner possessed himself of the things the missing man had about his person," pursued Mr. Arkell. "Mr. Prattleton thought at the time that this could perhaps have been explained away, I mean the finding of the pencil-case—that Mr. Dundyke might have dropped it on going out from breakfast, and the other have picked it up; but since the arrival of Mrs. Dundyke's letter yesterday, he says he does not like the look of it at all."

"And the bank-notes that Mr. Dundyke had undoubtedly about his person were found to have been changed the subsequent day in Geneva," spoke up Robert Carr. "The money-changer thought they had been changed by a man whose appearance agreed with that of Mr. Hardcastle. And then there was the testimony of the Swiss peasant."

"What was the testimony?" asked the squire.

"A peasant, or small farmer, testified that he saw two gentlemen together walking away from the direction of the lake on the day of the disappearance;

and in describing them, he exactly described the persons and dress of Mr. Hardcastle and Mr. Dundyke. I told Mrs. Dundyke," added the clergyman, "that I did not like her account of this Mr. Hardcastle; and she had expressed to me no suspicion of him then."

"And why did they not cause him to be apprehended?" asked the squire. "There could not well be a clearer case. I have committed many a man upon half the evidence. What sort of a man was he in person, this Hardcastle?"

"A tall, strong man, very dark; a fine man, Mrs. Dundyke says. I should think," added the clergyman, ranging his eyes around, lest haply he might find anyone in the present company to illustrate his meaning by ever so slight a likeness, as we are all apt to do in trying to describe a stranger—"I should think——"

Robert Carr stopped; his eyes were resting on the white face of Benjamin Carr. Those sallow, dark faces when they turn white are not pleasant to look upon.

"I should think," he continued, "that he must have been some such a man as your son here, sir. Yes, just such another; tall, strong, dark——"

"How dare you?" shouted Benjamin Carr, with a desperate oath. "How dare you point at me as the—the—as Mr. Hardcastle?"

The whole table bounded to their feet as if

electrified. Benjamin had risen to his full height; his eyes glared on the clergyman; his fist was lifted menacingly to his face. Had he gone out of his senses? Some of them truly thought so. That he had momentarily allowed himself to lose his presence of mind, there could be no question.

"What on earth has taken you, Ben?"

The words came from Mrs. Lewis. Her brother's demeanour had been puzzling her. He had sat, with that one slight interruption mentioned, with his head down, looking sullen, as if he took no interest in the narrative; and she had seen his face grow whiter and whiter. She supposed it to be caused by the story; and said to herself, that she should not have thought Ben was chicken-hearted.

The squire followed suit. "Have you taken leave of your senses, sir? What's the matter with you? *What* is it, I say?"

"Your visitor offended me, sir," replied Benjamin Carr, slowly sitting down in his chair again, and beginning to recollect himself. "How dare he say that I bear a resemblance to this Hardcastle?"

"He never did say it," angrily returned the squire. "If you cause such a startling interruption at my table again, I shall request you to think twice before you sit down to it."

Mrs. Lewis was staring at her brother with a sort of wondering stare. Mr. Arkell could not

make him out; and the young clergyman stood perfectly confounded. Altogether, Benjamin Carr was under a sea of keen eyes; and he knew it.

"I'm sure I beg your pardon if my words offended you," began Robert Carr. "I meant no offence. I only wished to convey an impression of what this Mr. Hardcastle was like—a tall, fine, dark man, as described to me. I never saw him. The same description would apply to thousands of men."

"I thought you did intend offence," said Benjamin Carr in a distinct tone. "Your words and manner implied it, at any rate."

"Don't show yourself a fool, Benjamin," cried out the squire. "I shall begin to think you are one. The clergyman no more meant to liken you to the man, than he meant to liken me; he was only trying to describe the sort of person. What has taken you? You must have grown desperately thin-skinned all on a sudden."

"Can't you let it drop?" said Benjamin, angrily. The squire sent up his plate as he spoke, for the ham that had been waiting all this while; perhaps by way of creating a divertissement; and Ben lifted the slice with a jerk, and then jerked the knife and fork down again. Mrs. Lewis, who had never come out of the prolonged stare, apparently arrived now at the solution of the problem.

"I know what it is, Ben," she quietly said. "This Hardcastle must be an acquaintance of yours. You know you do pick up all sorts of—— "

"It is a lie," interrupted Ben, regardless of his good manners.

"Papa"—turning to the squire—"rely upon it I am right. Ben no doubt fell in with this Hardcastle on his travels, grew intimate with him, and now does not like to hear him aspersed."

"Be quiet, Emma," cried Ben, but his voice was lowered now, as if with concentrated passion, or policy. "You talk like a fool."

"Well, perhaps I do," retorted Mrs. Lewis, "but I think it is as I say for all that. You would not put yourself out like this for nothing. I dare say you did know the man; it was just the time that you were at Geneva."

"I was not at Geneva."

"You *were* at Geneva," she persisted. "You know you wrote home from thence."

"Why yes, of course you did, Ben," added the squire. "Valentine showed us the letter: you said you were hard up in it. But that's nothing new."

"I swear that I never saw this Hardcastle in my life," said Ben Carr, his white face turning to a dusky red. "What time did this affair happen?" he continued, suddenly addressing Mr. Arkell. "If

I had been in Geneva at the time, I must have heard of it."

"I can tell you," said Robert Carr. "Mr. and Mrs. Dundyke went to Geneva the middle of July, and this must have happened about the second week in August."

Benjamin Carr poured himself out a glass of wine as he listened. He was growing cool and collected again.

"Ah, I thought I could not have been there. I went to Geneva the latter part of June. I and a fellow were taking a walking tour together. We stayed there a few days, and left it for Savoy the first week in July. I think I did write to Valentine while I was there. All these people, that you speak of, must have arrived afterwards."

"Then did you not see this Mr. Hardcastle, Ben?" asked his sister.

"I tell you, no! I never saw or heard of him in my life."

"Then why need you have flown out so?"

"Well, one does not like to be compared to a—murderer. Some of you had been calling him one."

No more was said. But the hilarity (if there had been any) of the meeting was taken away, and Robert Carr rose to leave. He had a little business to do in Westerbury yet, he said, and must go back that night to London. The squire was the

only one who showed courtesy in the farewell. Benjamin was sullenly resentful still; Mrs. Lewis haughty and indifferent.

"Is he quite in his right mind?" Robert Carr asked of Mr. Arkell, as they drove out of the avenue.

"Who?—Benjamin Carr? Oh yes, he is right enough. He is as sharp as a needle."

"Then what could have caused him to break out in the manner he did? I never was so taken to in my life."

"I don't know," said Mr. Arkell; "it is puzzling me still. But for his very emphatic denial, I should asume it to be as Mrs. Lewis suggested—that he must have got acquainted with this Hardcastle, and did not like to hear any ill of him."

"Is he a married man?"

"No. Not any of the squire's children have married, except Mrs. Lewis. And she's a widow, as you heard her say."

"I suppose she is the daughter that has entered into possession of my grandfather's house?"

"She is. Hoping, no doubt, to stay there."

"Tell me, Mr. Arkell," resumed Robert Carr after a pause, for he could not forget the recent occurrence, "did *you* see anything offensive in my allusion?"

"Certainly not. Neither would anyone else. I say I cannot make out Benjamin Carr."

Before starting for London that night, Robert Carr paid a visit to Mr. Fauntleroy. It was after office hours, but that gentleman received him in his drawing-room. One of Mr. Fauntleroy's daughters, a buxom damsel on the same large scale as her father, was thumping through some loud piece on the piano. She satisfied her curiosity by a good look at the intruder, as all Westerbury would like to have done, for his name had been in men's mouths that day, and then retired with a good-humoured smile and nod, carrying her piece of music.

"Bab!" called out the lawyer.

Miss Fauntleroy came back. "Did you speak, pa?"

"Don't go strumming that in the next room. This gentleman has perhaps called to talk on matters of business."

She threw down the music with a laugh: gave another good-natured nod to Robert, and finally quitted the room.

"Mr. Fauntleroy, I have come—but I ought first to apologize for calling at this hour, but I am going off at once to London—I have come to ask if you will act for me as my legal adviser?"

Mr. Fauntleroy made a momentary pause. "Do you mean generally, or in any particular cause?"

"I mean in this, my cause. I require some

solicitor to take it up at once, and serve a notice of ejectment on Squire Carr, from the possession of the property he has assumed. I suppose that would be the first legal step; but you will know what to do better than I. As the many years solicitor to my grandfather, I thought you might perhaps have no objection to become mine."

"I have no objection in the world," said Mr. Fauntleroy. "But, my good sir—and this, mind you, is disinterested advice—I would recommend you to pause before you enter on any such contest. There's not a shadow of chance that the property can be wrested from Squire Carr, so long as your father's marriage remains a doubt. It is his by law."

"I do not think there is a shadow of doubt that the proofs of the marriage will be found, and speedily. I go up to London to search. Meanwhile you will be so kind as act just as you would act were the proofs in your hand. I will not allow Squire Carr to retain, by ever so short a time, the property unmolested, or to fancy he retains it," continued the young man, in some emotion. "Every hour that he does so is a reflection on my mother's name."

"But—yes, that's all very well, very dutiful—but where's the use of entering on a contest certain to be lost?"

"It is certain to be gained; I know the proofs will be forthcoming."

"The most prudent plan will be to wait until they are," returned the lawyer. He was not usually so considerate for his clients; but this, as he looked upon it, was a hopeless case, one that nobody, many degrees removed from a fool, would venture upon.

"No," said Robert Carr, "I will not wait a day. Be so kind as take proper steps at once, Mr. Fauntleroy."

"Very well; if you insist upon it. It will cost money, you know."

"That shall be placed in your hands as soon as I can send the necessary instructions to Rotterdam. What sum shall you require?"

"Oh, suppose you let me have fifty pounds at first. Before that's expended, perhaps—perhaps some decision may have been come to."

Had Mr. Fauntleroy spoken the words on his tongue, they would have run, "perhaps you will have come to your senses."

"I will spare no expense on this cause; any money you want, you shall have, only my right must be maintained against the other branch of the family. Do you understand me, Mr. Fauntleroy?"

"I do; and I must ask you to understand me,

and to remember later that I did not advise this. If the proofs of the marriage shall come to light, why, then of course the tables will be turned."

"By the way," said Robert Carr, "I have never asked what amount of money my grandfather has left?"

"Not much less than the value of twenty thousand pounds, taking it in the aggregate. He did not live up to his income, and it accumulated. There are several houses; the one he resided in is a beautiful little place. You have not been inside it?"

"No; I met Mrs. Lewis to-day, at the squire's, and I thought she might have invited me to see it," added Robert Carr. "But she did not."

"No danger; they'll keep you at arm's length, if they can. Well, Mr. Carr, you will not forget what I say, that I do not advise you to enter on this contest. And should you, after a day or two's reflection, think better of it, there's no harm done. Just drop me a line to say so, that's all. I wont charge you for my advice."

"You must think I am of a changeable nature," returned the young clergyman, half resentfully.

"I should think you a sensible man."

Robert could not smile, he was too serious. "And if you receive the money from me, instead of the letter you suggest, you will immediately

commence this action; is that an understood thing between us, Mr. Fauntleroy?"

"It is," said Mr. Fauntleroy; "it will cost a mint of money, mind you, if it goes on to trial."

Robert Carr said no more; he was satisfied. As he went down the richly-carpeted stairs, two large female heads, and two coarsely-handsome, good-natured faces were propelled over the balustrades, to gaze after him: the heads and the faces of the Miss Fauntleroys.

CHAPTER X.

A MISSIVE FOR SQUIRE CARR.

Domestic relations did not progress very pleasantly at Squire Carr's. It was the old story; the old grievance; the one that had disturbed the internal economy of the home ever since Benjamin became a grown man: Benjamin required money, and the squire protested he had it not to give. Ben, he said, wanted to ruin him.

This time Ben had come home particularly out at elbows, metaphorically speaking; literally, he was, in regard to clothes, rather better off than usual. Ben had quitted his home the previous April, with a very fair sum of money in his pocket, drawn from the squire; where he had spent the time since was not very clear, unless he had been, as the squire expressed it, dodging about the continent; two or three letters having been received from him at long intervals, dated from different parts of it. Ben was not accustomed to be particularly communicative on the subject of his own

wanderings; and all he said now was, that he had made a "pedestrian tour." One other thing was a vast deal more clear—that he had brought back empty pockets.

He was now worrying the squire to advance him funds for a visit to Australia, where he should be sure to make his fortune. Three or four fellows, whom he knew, were going, he said; they had a fine prospect before them, and he had the opportunity offered him of joining them. The worrying had begun on the very evening subsequent to the visit of Mr. Arkell and Robert Carr; a week or more had gone on since; and Ben systematically continued his importunities. The squire turned a stone-deaf ear. Ben had once before got money from him to make his fortune in Australia; and had come home after a two years' absence without a shirt to his back: Squire Carr must live to be an older man than he was now, before he forgot that. Valentine Carr put in *his* voice against it; he had for a long while been angrily resentful at these sums of money being advanced to Ben, far larger ones, he suspected, than the reigning powers allowed to come to his knowledge; and he was now raising his voice in opposition. He was the heir; and the estate, he said, was already impoverished too much.

One cloudy Saturday morning, close, hot, and

unhealthy, Valentine Carr was mounting his horse to go to Westerbury. They had breakfasted early; breakfast was always taken early at the squire's, but especially so on Saturdays, the market day at Westerbury. Squire Carr was standing by his son, giving him various directions.

"You'll see how prices run to-day, Valentine; but mark you, I'll not sell a sheaf of the old corn if the market's flat. And the new you need not think of soliciting offers for, for I shall not sell yet awhile. The barley market ought to be brisk to-day; some of the maltsters, I hear, are already preparing to steep; and you may, perhaps, get rid of some loads. Have you the samples?"

Valentine Carr dived with one hand into his capacious pocket, by way of answer, and just showed some three or four little bags tied round with tape.

"You'll get first prices, mind, or you won't sell. Not a farmer in all the county can show better barley this year than ours. Do you hear?"

"I know," ungraciously returned Valentine. "I believe you think I'm a child still. I can't ride off to market without you, but you go on at me in this fashion: and it's nigh upon thirty years now since I went first."

"I know my own business better than anybody, and I can't afford to let things go below their

value," rejoined the squire. "A halfpenny a bushel would make a difference to me now, and I should feel it. I'm shorter of money than I ought to be."

"Money goes in many ways that it ought not to go in," said Valentine, gathering up his bridle with a sniff. And the squire knew that it was a side-thrust at Ben. "Anything more?"

"You had better call on Emma, and ask whether she has made a list of the plate and pictures. If she has not, you may tell her that I shall come over next week and go over the things for myself. She might have sent it to me days ago. I'll not have so much as a plated spoon omitted, and so I told her. That's all."

Valentine Carr touched his horse and rode at a quick trot down the avenue. When the squire looked round, he found Benjamin—who had just got down to breakfast—at his side.

"We shall have a nasty, hot, muggy day, Ben!"

"Yes," said Ben, "we get these days sometimes in September. Father, if you won't let me have the two hundred, will you let me have one? I don't want to lose this chance, and my friends will have sailed. They are putting in three hundred each, but——"

"How many times are you going to tell me

that?" interrupted the squire. "I don't believe it; no, I don't believe you have any friends who are possessed of three hundred to put. It is of no use your bothering, Ben; I haven't got the money to spare."

"Not got it to spare, when you have just come in to twenty thousand pounds!" returned Ben, not, however, venturing to speak in any tone but a conciliating one. "I only wish I had come in to a tithe of it! It was a slice of good luck that you never expected, squire, and you might be generous enough to help me once again."

In truth, the good luck had been so entirely unlooked for, that Squire Carr could not find in his heart to snub Ben for saying so, quite as fiercely as he might otherwise have done. "It was just a chance, Ben, Robert Carr's dying as he did."

"A very good chance for us. Look here, father: I can't stop on here, nagged at by Valentine, out of purse, out of *your* favour——"

"Whose fault is it that you are out of my favour?" interrupted the squire, taking off his old drab wide-awake to straighten a dent in the brim.

"Well, I suppose it's mine," acknowledged Ben. "What is a hundred pounds to the twenty thousand you have come into? A drop of water in the ocean."

"And if you got the hundred pounds and started

with it, you'd be writing home in three months for another hundred! It has always been the case, Ben."

The words seemed to imply symptoms of so great a concession, compared to the positive refusal hitherto accorded him, that Ben Carr's hopes went up like a sky-rocket. He saw the hundred pounds in his possession and himself ploughing the deep waters, as vividly as though the picture had been presented to him in a magic mirror.

"It is a chance that I have never had, squire. These men are steady, industrious, practical fellows, who will keep me to my work, whether I will or not. They go out to make money, and I shall make some. Who knows but I may return home with a fortune to match this, just come to you?"

"Ben, you harp upon this money of Marmaduke's; but let me tell you that I don't know what I should have done without it. I have had nothing but drains upon me for years: you've been one of them."

"The old hypocrite!" thought Ben, "he's rolling in money, besides this new windfall. Well, sir," he said aloud, "I shall write——"

"Who's this?" interrupted the squire, who did not see so well as he once did.

It was the postman. Letters were not frequent at the squire's, as they are at many houses. The man was coming up the avenue, in the distance

as yet. Squire Carr walked towards him and stretched out his hand for the letters.

The postman gave him two. One was a large, blue, formidable-looking packet, addressed to himself; the other was a perfumed, mignonne, three-cornered sort of missive, for Benjamin Carr, Esq.

"Here, Ben, I don't know who your correspondent may be," said the squire, tossing him the note. "She's an idiot, that's certain; nobody, above one, would think of sending a doll's thing like that through the post. It's a wonder it wasn't lost."

Benjamin Carr glanced at the handwriting and slipped the note into the pocket of his shooting coat. Sauntering to a little distance, while the squire was busy with his own letter, he there took it out, opened, and began to read it: a closely-written epistle, on thin foreign paper.

He was startled by something very like the bellow of a bull. Turning round, he saw the squire in a fine commotion, and the noise had come from him.

"Why, what is the matter?" exclaimed Ben, advancing.

"Matter!" ejaculated Squire Carr—"*matter!* They are mad; or else I am dreaming."

He held the formidable document before his eyes. He turned it, he gazed at it, he shook it, he pinched himself to see whether he *was* dreaming. If any

man ever believed that his eyes played him false, Squire Carr believed his did then.

"What is it?" repeated the astonished Ben.

It was a notice from Mr. Fauntleroy that an action was entered upon—to eject him from the possession of that bijou of a house; to wrest from him the fortune; to give Marmaduke's money to Robert Carr; to forbid him to touch or remove so much (his own words just before to his son) as a plated spoon of the effects; to reduce him, in short, to a poor wretched non-inheriting beggar again. Not that all this, or the half of it, was stated; it was implied, and that was enough for the squire's vivid imagination.

"Ben, my boy, what does it mean?" he gasped.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Ben, considerably crestfallen.

"I'm not dreaming, am I?" asked the squire. "Mercy be good to us! What can they have found? Perhaps old Marmaduke made a will after all! They'd never enter an action without being justified. Get the horse into the dog-cart and drive me to the station, Ben. I must go over to see Fauntleroy. Hang him! the sly old villain! I should like to twist his neck."

"But you will promise me the hundred pounds, father?"

"Hundred pounds be shot!" shrieked the squire

in a fury. "I've just got notice that I'm ruined, and he asks me for a hundred pounds! No, sir! nor a hundred pence. How can I afford money, now this inheritance is threatened?"

Benjamin Carr had a great mind to tell his father, that even if it were threatened and taken, he was as well off now as he had been a short while before. But it was not a time to press matters, and he drove the squire to the station in silence.

On that busy Saturday morning—and Saturdays were always busy days at the office of Mr. Fauntleroy—the clerks were amazed by the disturbed entrance of Squire Carr, pushing, agitated, restless; far more amazed than was perhaps their master, Mr. Fauntleroy. He had half expected it.

There ensued a hasty explanation; but the squire scarcely allowed himself to listen to it. Of all the blows that could have come upon him, this was the worst.

"And what do you think of yourself, pray, to be taking up a cause against the Carr family, when you have stuck by it for half a century, or it by you?"

"By old Marmaduke; by no others of it," returned Mr. Fauntleroy, who was secretly enjoying the squire's perplexity beyond everything.

"Why do you turn round against him now? I did not expect it of you, Fauntleroy."

"I don't understand you, squire."

"You are turning against the money he left, which is the same thing, wanting to make ducks and drakes of it."

"Marmaduke Carr's grandson came here and asked me if I would act for him as his solicitor, and I assented," said Mr. Fauntleroy. "In entering this action against you, I am but obeying his instructions."

"Marmaduke Carr's grandson!" scoffed the squire. "Who is he, the ill-born cur"—not but that the squire's words were somewhat plainer—"that he should presume to set himself up in his false pretences?"

"Ill-born or well-born, my clients are the same to me, provided their cause is good, and they pay me," coolly rejoined Mr. Fauntleroy.

"Well, is it a hoax?" asked the squire, coming nearer to the point, for Mr. Fauntleroy was taking a stealthy glance at his watch.

"If you mean is the action a hoax, most certainly it is not. Robert Carr looks upon it that he has the best right to his grandfather's money, and——"

"Why do you call him Robert *Carr?*" interposed the squire, in a flash of anger.

"What else can I call him? I wish you'd be a little cooler, and let me finish. And he has given me instructions to spare no pains, no expense, in maintaining this action against you."

"Is he a fool?" asked the squire. "It's one of two things: either he is a fool—for he must know that such an action can't be sustained under present circumstances, and so must you—or else he has got some secret information that I am in ignorance of. *Has* he got it? Is there a will of Marmaduke's found?"

"Of course there's not," said Mr. Fauntleroy, taken by surprise; "I should have heard of it, if there had been. As to any other information, I can't say; I don't know of any."

"Look here, Fauntleroy: if there is to be an action—not that I should think the fellow will be mad enough to go on with it—will you act for me?'

"I can't," said Mr. Fauntleroy; "I am acting for him."

"Turn him over. Who's he? I'd rather have you myself. And I must say you might have been neighbourly enough not to take this up against me."

"What does that signify? If I had not taken it up, somebody else would. And you have your own solicitors, you know, squire."

The squire growled. His solicitors were Mynn and Mynn, of Eckford—quiet, steady-going practitioners; but in so desperate a cause as this, the squire would have felt himself safer with a keen and not over-scrupulous man, such as Mr. Fauntleroy.

"You will not act for me, then?"

"I can't, squire."

"And you mean to carry it on to action?"

"I must do it. They are my positive instructions."

Squire Carr turned off in desperation, nearly upsetting Mr. Kenneth as he stamped through the outer office. As fast as he could, he stamped up to the railway station, and took the first train to Eckford, arriving at the office of Mynn and Mynn in a white heat.

Mynn and Mynn themselves were nearly myths, so far as their clients could get hold of them. Old Mynn had the gout perpetually; and the younger brother, George Mynn, had a chronic sort of asthma, and could not speak to people half his time. What business was absolutely necessary for a principal to do, George Mynn mostly did it. He made the journeys to London, he attended the sessions and assizes at Westerbury; but it very often happened that, when a client called at the office, neither would be there.

As it was, on this day. A young man of the name of Richards was head of the office just now, for the managing clerk had died, and Mynn and Mynn were looking out for another. A sharp, clever, unscrupulous man was this Richards, who, if he proved as clever when he got into practice for

himself, would stand a fair chance of getting out of it again. He was alone when Squire Carr entered, and leaned over his desk to shake hands with him. He was a great friend of Valentine Carr's, and sometimes dined at the squire's on Sundays—a thin, weaseny sort of man, not unlike Valentine himself, with a cast in one eye.

"Mr. George Mynn here to-day?"

"He is here to-day, squire; but he is not in just now. He's gone to Westerbury."

"I want to see him; I must see him," cried the squire, wiping his hot brows. "The most infamous thing has happened, Richards, that you ever heard of. They are going to try and wrest my Uncle Marmaduke's property from me."

"Who is?" asked Richards, in wonder.

"The son of that Robert Carr who went off with Martha Ann Hughes. It was before your time; but perhaps you have heard of it. There are children; and one of them has been down here, and has given Fauntleroy instructions to proceed against me and force me to give up the property."

"But I thought there was no marriage?" cried Richards. "Mr. Mynn was talking about it the other day."

"Neither was there."

Richards paused a moment, and then burst into a fit of laughter. To make pretensions of

claiming property in such a case, amused him excessively.

"Well, they are doing it," said Squire Carr. "But I am astonished at Fauntleroy taking up such a cause. It's infamous, you know. They can do it only to annoy me; for they must be aware it's an action that will not lie."

"I say, squire, you must take care of one thing," said Richards, with the familiarity that characterised him, and which to some minds was exceedingly offensive—"mind they don't get up a false marriage."

"A false marriage! Why, the parties are dead."

"Oh, I mean proofs—false proofs. I've known such things done. When a fortune's at stake, you know, any means seem right ones."

"And I dare say they'd be capable of it," assented the squire. "Well, it must be seen to immediately. Here's what I had sent from Fauntleroy."

He drew out of his pocket the large letter, and Richards ran his eyes over it.

"They mean mischief," was his laconic remark.

"When *can* I see Mr. George Mynn?" asked the squire, the usual difficulties of getting at that gentleman striking upon his mind, especially after the last sentence, as a personal wrong. "Why doesn't he get a confidential clerk to do the outdoor work, so as to be in to see clients himself?"

"They are about engaging one, I believe," said Mr. Richards, alluding to the confidential clerk; "but he won't enter before December or January."

"Not before December or January!" retorted Squire Carr, as if that were another personal wrong.

"I heard George Mynn say we could do without one until then. So we can. The assize business is over, and there won't be much press for the next month or two. For my part, I wish they'd do without one for good. *I* could manage all they want done, if they'd let me."

"Well, look you here, Richards. I shall go on to the 'Bell' and get a bit of dinner at the ordinary, and then I shall come back here and wait till he comes in."

"He mayn't come in at all again to-day—sure not to, if he doesn't get back from Westerbury till late," was the satisfactory rejoinder of Richards; and Squire Carr felt that he should like to strike somebody in the dilemma, if he only knew whom.

"Then you will have to take my instructions," he said, sharply; "I shall be back in an hour."

"Very good," said Mr. Richards. "And we can talk this business over to-morrow, squire, as much as you like; for I am coming to your place for the day. I've promised Valentine, and I want to make the acquaintance of your second son."

For this Mr. Richards was but a clerk of some months standing at Mynn and Mynn's; to which situation he had come from a distance, and, therefore, had not yet enjoyed the honour of an introduction to Mr. Benjamin Carr.

Thus the great cause, "Carr *versus* Carr," was inaugurated. Those connected with it little dreamt of the strange excitement it was to create, ere the termination came.

*

CHAPTER XI.

THE LAST OF ROBERT CARR.

By a bright fire in her handsome and most comfortable drawing-room, in her widow's cap—assumed, now that all hope had died out—sat Mrs. Dundyke. The October wind was whistling without, the October rain was falling on the window panes; and there was a look of anxiety on her otherwise calm face, still so fair and attractive, as she listened to the storm. The summer and autumn, up to the close of September, had been remarkably warm and fine; but when October came in, it brought bad weather with it.

A gust and a patter, worse than any that had gone before, aroused Mrs. Dundyke from her seat. She laid her work—a woollen comforter, that she was knitting—on the small and beautiful table at her side, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and walked to the window.

"I wonder whether he is out in it?" she said, as she watched the trees bending in the storm. "This

anxiety is killing him. The very work is killing him. Abroad in all weathers; out of one damp church into another; getting heated with his weak state and the ardour of the pursuit, and then becoming chilled in some sudden storm such as this! He may find the record, perhaps, but he will never live to reap the benefit."

Need you be told that Mrs. Dundyke's soliloquy applied to Robert Carr? He was staying with her. When he went back to London from Westerbury, and sought Mrs. Dundyke, to deliver certain messages of the kindest nature sent by him from Mr. Arkell and Travice, she had insisted upon his making her house his home while he remained in London to pursue his search.

And he did so; and began his toilsome search of the London church marriage registers. What a wearying task it was, let those testify who may have been obliged to enter upon such. By dint of a great deal of trouble, and of correspondence with Mr. Fauntleroy, and recalled recollections from middle-aged people in Westerbury, who had been young men once and friends of the elder Robert Carr, he, the present Robert Carr, succeeded in ascertaining the place where his father and mother had sojourned that fortnight in London. It was in one of the quiet streets of the Strand, in the parish of St. Clement Danes. But when St. Clement Danes'

register was examined, no entry of any such marriage could be found there; and for the first time since the blow fell, Robert Carr felt his heart sink with a vague fear that he dared not dwell upon.

It had seemed to him so easy! He had felt as sure a trust in his mother's marriage as he felt in Heaven. It was only to find out where they had stayed that fortnight in London, and search the parish church register; for there, and only there, Robert Carr argued, the marriage had taken place. But there, it was now evident, that it had *not* taken place, and he was all at sea.

He began with the other churches; he knew not what else to do. In Holland they could not have been married, from the want of legal papers, and other matters, necessary to foreigners united abroad. He searched the churches nearest to St. Clement Danes first, and then went on to others, and others, and others. He would go up after breakfast from his kind friend, who was nursing him like a mother, and begin his daily task; out of one church into another, as she had phrased it, in all weathers—rain, hail, storm—and go back at night again utterly wearied out.

Mrs. Dundyke stood at the window watching the rain. She fancied it was beginning to grow dusk; but it was not time just yet, and the afternoon was a dark one. He would not be home yet awhile, she

was thinking. He stopped in those cold churches as long as there was a ray of light to see by. Mrs. Dundyke was turning from the window, when she saw an omnibus stop, and Robert Carr get out of it. He seemed worse than usual; weaker in strength, more tottering in frame; and as he looked up at her with a faint, sad smile, a conviction came over her that she should not be able to save the life of this poor young man; that all her care, all her comforts, all her ample income would not benefit him. And how very ample her income would for the future be, she had not known until that day. She was a rich lady for this world; she might ride in her carriage, if she chose, and be grand for all time.

"Oh! Robert!" she exclaimed, meeting him on the stairs—and she had taken to call him by the familiar name, as she might a son—"I fear you have got very wet! I am so glad you came home early!"

He walked unsteadily to the easy chair by the fire, and sunk in it. Mrs. Dundyke, with him daily, saw not the change that every hour was surely making in him; but she did notice how wan and ill he looked this evening.

"Have you not been well to-day, Robert?"

"Not very. I have been spitting so much of that blood again. And I felt so weary too; so sick of it all."

"There's no success, then, again!"

"None. Altogether, I thought I'd leave it for the day, and come back and take a rest."

He sighed as he spoke, but the sigh broke off with a moaning sound. Mrs. Dundyke glanced at him. She had resumed her knitting—which was a chest protector for himself—until the wine that she had rung for should be brought.

"Robert, are you losing heart?"

"No, I can never lose that. There *was* a marriage, if we could only find out where. You would be as sure of it as I am, dear Mrs. Dundyke, had you known my mother."

Mrs. Dundyke made no rejoinder. For herself, she had never fully believed in the marriage at all, but she was not cruel enough to say so. She sat watching him over her knitting: now bending forward with his thin hands spread out to the warmth of the fire; now suddenly bringing his hands to his chest as he coughed, choked; now lying back in the chair, panting, his thin nostrils working, his breath coming in great gasps; and there came in that moment over Mrs. Dundyke as she looked, a conviction—she knew not whence or why—that a very, very short period would bring the end.

She felt her face grow moist with a cold moisture. How was it that she had been so blind to the obvious truth? She knitted two whole rows of

knitting before she spoke, and then she told him, with a calm voice, that she should write for his wife.

"How kind you are!" he murmured. "I shall never repay you."

Mrs. Dundyke laughed cheerfully.

"I don't want repayment. There is nothing to repay."

"Nothing to repay! No kindly friendship, no trouble, no cost! I wonder how much I cost you in wine alone?"

"Robert," she said, in a low, earnest tone—though she wondered whether he might not be jesting—"do you know what they tell me my future income will be? Mr. Littelby was here to-day, giving me an account of things, for I put my poor husband's affairs into his hands on my return. It will not be much less than two thousand a year."

The amount of the sum quite startled him.

"Two thousand a year!"

"It will indeed, as they tell me. By the articles of partnership I am allowed a handsome income from the house in Fenchurch-street; but the chief of the money comes from speculations my husband has been engaged in for many years, in connexion with a firm on the Stock Exchange. Safe speculations, and profitable; not hazardous ones. This money is realized, and put out in the Funds, in

what they call the Five-per-Cents.; and I shall have nearly two thousand a year. I had no idea of it; and the puzzle to me now is, how I shall spend it. Don't you think I require a few kind visitors to help me?"

Before he could answer, there came on a violent fit of coughing, worse than any she had yet seen, and quite a little stream of blood trickled from his mouth. It was nothing particularly new, but that night Mrs. Carr was written for in haste.

"Tell her to bring the desk with her," said Robert; and Mrs. Dundyke wrote down the words just as he spoke them.

But he rallied again, and in a day or two was actually out as before, prosecuting his search amidst those hopeless churches. He confided what he called a secret to Mrs. Dundyke—namely, that he had not confessed to his wife that any suspicion was cast upon his birth. The honest truth was, Robert Carr shrunk from it; for he knew it would so alarm and grieve her. She was well connected; had fallen in love with the young Cambridge student during a visit she was paying in England; and when the time came that marriage was spoken of, her friends raised some objection because Robert Carr's father was not of gentle blood, but was in business as a merchant. What she would say when she came to know that he was

suspected of not being even that merchant's legitimate son, Robert scarcely cared to speculate.

She arrived in an afternoon at Mrs. Dundyke's, having come direct to London Bridge by the steamer from Rotterdam. Robert was out in London, as usual; but Mrs. Dundyke was not alone: Mildred Arkell was with her. Perhaps of all people, next to his wife, Mildred had been most shocked at the fate of Mr. Dundyke. This was the first time she had seen his widow, for she had been away in the country with Lady Dewsbury.

A young, pretty woman, looking little more than a girl, with violet-blue eyes, dark hair, and a flush upon her cheeks. Mrs. Dundyke marvelled at her youth—that she should be a wife since three years, and the mother of two children.

"I wrote to you to be sure to bring the children," said Mrs. Dundyke.

"I know: it was very kind. But I thought, as Robert was ill, they might disturb him with their noise. They are but babies; and I left them behind."

Mrs. Dundyke was considering how she could best impart the news of the suspected birth to this poor, unconscious young lady. "If you could give her a hint of it yourself, should she arrive during my absence!" Robert Carr had said to Mrs. Dundyke that very morning, with the hectic deepen-

ing on his hollow cheeks. And Mrs. Dundyke began her task.

And a sad shock it proved to be. Mrs. Carr, accustomed to the legal formalities that attend a marriage in the country of her birth, and without which formalities the ceremony cannot be performed, could not for some time be led to understand how, if there was a marriage, it could have been kept a secret. There were many points difficult to make her, a foreigner, understand; but when she had mastered them, she grew strangely interested in the recital of the past, and Mildred Arkell, as a resident in Westerbury at the time, was called upon to repeat every little detail connected with the departure of her husband's father and mother from their native place. In listening, Mrs. Carr's cheek grew hectic as her husband's.

But she had her secret also, which she had been keeping from her husband. She told it now to Mrs. Dundyke. Something was wrong with affairs at Rotterdam. The surviving partners of the house, three covetous old Dutchmen, disputed their late partner's right (or rather that of his children) to draw out certain monies from the house; at the death of Robert Carr it lapsed to the house, they said. This was the account Mrs. Carr gave, but it was not a very clear one, neither did she seem to understand the case. The Carrs had in the house

other money, about which there was no dispute, but even this the firm refused to pay out until the other matter was settled. The effect was, that the Carrs had no money to go on with; and there would probably be litigation.

"I did not tell Robert, because I was in hopes it would be comfortably decided without him," said Mrs. Carr. "By the way, you wrote me word that Robert said I was to bring over the desk. Which desk did he mean? his own or his father's?"

"I really don't know," replied Mrs. Dundyke; "he was very ill when he spoke, and I wrote the words down just as he spoke them."

"Well, I have brought both; I know he examined Mr. Carr's desk after his death, and he locked it up again, and has the key with him. His own desk also was at home; so, not knowing which was meant, I brought the two."

When Robert Carr came home that evening he looked awfully ill. The expression is not too strong a one; there was something in his attenuated face, its sunken eyes, its ghastly colour, and its working nostrils, that struck the beholder with awe. Mrs. Dundyke was alone in the dining parlour when he came in, and was shocked to see him. Whether it was the long day's work on his decreasing strength—for he had remained later than usual

—she could not tell, but he had never looked so near death as this.

"Oh, Robert!" was her involuntary exclamation; "I had better go up and prepare your wife before she sees you."

He suffered her to put him in the great invalid chair she had surreptitiously had brought in a day or two before; he drank the restoring cordial she tendered him; he was passive in her hands as a child, in his great weakness. "I'm afraid I must have a week's rest," he said to her, as she busied herself taking off his gloves, and smoothing his poor damp hair. "My strength seems to be failing unaccountably; I don't know how I have got through the day."

"Oh yes, yes," she eagerly assented; "a little rest; that is what you want. You shall lie in bed all to-morrow."

"Has Emma brought the children?"

"No. They are quite well," she says; "I am going to send her down to you. And, Robert, she knows all, and says she'll help to search the registers herself."

Mrs. Dundyke spoke in a light-hearted tone, but before she went upstairs she sent an urgent message for the doctor.

And when the surgeon came, he said there was no further hope whatever, as, indeed, there had

not been for some time now, and that a day or two would "decide."

Decide what? But that he did not say.

In one sense of the word, it may be said that death had come suddenly upon Robert Carr. Had he been less absorbed in that one point of worldly interest, he might have seen its approach more clearly. Not until the morning succeeding his wife's arrival, did he look it fully in the face; and then he found that it was upon the very threshold, was entering in at the opened door.

All the bustle, the anxiety as to temporal interests, the plans and provisions for the future for those to be left behind, ensued. Mrs. Dundyke hastily summoned a legal gentleman, Mr. Littelby. He was a solicitor of many years' standing, not in practice for himself, but conducting the business of an eminent legal firm. He was an old friend of the Dundykes, and Robert Carr had seen him several times; indeed his advice and assistance had been of much service in the search of the church registers. Mr. Littelby was about leaving his present situation, and was in negotiation with a firm in the country for another. Mrs. Dundyke sent up a hasty summons for him.

A handsome bedchamber, in which was every comfort, a bright fire in the hearth, a bed, on which lay a shadowy form, a pale shadowy face, a

young weeping girl standing near, soon to be a widow, and you have almost the last scene in the short life of Robert Carr.

He was dying, poor fellow, with that secret, which he had no doubt shortened his life in endeavouring to trace, still unsolved; and he was dying with the conviction, that the proofs did exist somewhere, as fully upon him as it ever had been.

"Emma!"

She dried her eyes, and tried to hide that they had been wet, as she heard the call. The day was getting on.

"Is Littelby not come yet?"

"Yes, I think he is. Some one came a few minutes ago, and is downstairs with Mrs. Dundyke. I think I hear them coming up."

Mrs. Dundyke was coming into the room with a gentleman, a middle-aged man with a sharp nose and pleasant dark eyes. It was Mr. Littelby. They were left alone together—the lawyer and the dying man. But it was a very short and simple task, this will-making. Over almost as soon as begun.

"He asked me to tie you up with trustees, Emma," said the dying man; "but I have left all to you—children, and money, and all else. You will love them, won't you, when I am gone?"

"Oh, Robert, yes!" she said, with a burst of sorrow. "I wish I and they could go with you."

"And, Emma, mind that you prosecute this search. I have asked Littelby to help you, and he will. He says he expects to leave London at the end of the year, for he is in negotiation with another firm; but I dare say it will be found before then. Let that search be your first and greatest task."

She said it should be—she would have promised anything in that parting hour. She lay, with her pretty hair on the counterpane, and her wet eyes turned to him, devouring his last looks, listening to his last words. Almost literally the last in this world, for, before the close of the afternoon, Robert Carr fell into a lethargy, from which he did not awake alive.

And those two lone women were together in the house of the dead—widows indeed. The one deprived of her young husband almost on the threshold of life; the other bereft, she knew not how, of her many years' partner. Poor Mrs. Dundyke had hardly wanted more sorrow in her desolate home.

So far as ease in the future went, *she* was well off. The large income mentioned by her to Robert Carr would indeed be hers. It was chiefly the result of that first thousand pounds Mr. Dundyke had risked on the Stock Exchange. Fortune had favoured him in an unusual degree. You remem-

ber the nails in the horse-shoe, how they doubled and doubled: so it had seemed to be with the thousand pounds of Mr. Dundyke. But poor Mrs. Carr's future fortune was all uncertain. Whether she would have sufficient to keep her children in easy competency, or whether she would find herself, like so many more gentlewomen, obliged to do something for her bread in this world of changes, she did not know.

Even in this week that succeeded her husband's death, she was applied to for money, which she could not find. The application came from Mr. Fauntleroy. Lawyers have a peculiar facility for getting rid of money, as some of us have been obliged to know to our cost; and Mr. Fauntleroy had already disposed of the first fifty pounds advanced to him, and wanted more if he was to go on with the case.

Mrs. Carr had it not. Until affairs should be settled in Rotterdam, she had no such sum at her command. She could have procured it indeed from many friends, but she was sorely puzzled what to do for the best. On the one hand, there was the dying promise to her husband to pursue this cause; on the other, there was the extreme doubt whether there was any real cause to pursue. If there was no cause, why, then, how worse than foolish it would be to spend money over a chimera.

Many and many were the anxious consultations she had with Mrs. Dundyke, even while her husband lay dead in the house.

On the day after the funeral—and there had been no mourner found to follow that poor young man to his last home, but one who had been fellow curate with him, and who was now in London—Mrs. Dundyke and her visitor were alone when a gentleman was shown in. A fine man yet, of middle age, but with a slight bend in the shoulders, as if from care, and grey threads mingling with his dark hair. It was not a time for Mrs. Carr to see strangers, and she rose to quit the drawing-room, after hurriedly replacing some papers in a desk she was examining. But there was something so noble, so pleasing, so refined, in the countenance of the man standing there, his hands held out to Mrs. Dundyke, and a sweet smile upon his lips, that she stopped involuntarily.

"Have you forgotten me, Betsey?"

For the moment she really had, for he was much changed; but the voice and the smile recalled her memory, and with a glad cry of recognition Mrs. Dundyke sprang forward, and received on her lips a sisterly kiss.

"Emma, don't go. This is your husband's friend, and my brother-in-law, William Arkell."

Mrs. Carr gladly held out her hand; her pretty

face raised in its widow's cap. A shade came over William Arkell's at seeing that badge on one so young.

He had a little business in London, he explained, connected with the transfer of some of his property, and came up, instead of writing; came up—there was no doubt of it, though he did not say so—that he might have the opportunity of seeing Mrs. Dundyke.

Mrs. Carr left the room, and Mr. Arkell drew his chair nearer to his sister-in-law.

"You have heard nothing further, Betsey, of — of your lost husband?"

She shook her head; she should never hear that again.

It was only natural that she should relate the circumstances to him, now that they met, although he had heard them so fully from Mr. Prattleton. Where much mystery exists, especially pertaining to undiscovered crime, it seems that we can never be tired of attempting to solve it. Human nature is the same all the world over, and these things do possess an irrepressible attraction for the human heart—very human it is, now and then. Mr. Arkell sat with his elbow on the arm of the chair, and his chin resting on his hand; he was looking dreamily into the fire as they talked.

"I should strongly suspect that Mr. Hardcastle,

Betsey; should you know him if you saw him again?"

"Know him! know that same Mr. Hardcastle!" she repeated, wondering at what seemed so superfluous a question. "I should know him to the very end of my life. I should know him by his eyes, if by nothing else. They seem to be always before mine."

"Were they peculiar eyes, then?"

"Very. The first time I saw him, that morning at breakfast, his eyes seemed to strike upon my memory with a sort of repulsion. I felt sure I had seen eyes like them somewhere; and that the *other* eyes had caused me repulse likewise. All the time we were together at Geneva, his eyes kept puzzling me; it was like a word we have on the tip of the tongue, every moment thinking we must recollect it, but it keeps baffling us. So was it with Mr. Hardcastle's eyes; and it was only in the moment he was leaving for Genoa that I recollected whose they were like."

"And whose were they like?"

"A gentleman's I never saw but twice; once at your house, at your own wedding breakfast, and once in the week subsequent to it at Mrs. Daniel Arkell's: Benjamin Carr."

"Who?" exclaimed Mr. Arkell.

"Benjamin Carr, the present squire's son."

He sat with sudden uprightness in his chair,

staring at her. The strange scene, when Robert Carr had likened Benjamin to the suspected murderer, was flashing into his mind. What did it *mean*, that agitation of Benjamin's? What did this likeness, now spoken of, mean? A wild doubt of horror came creeping over Mr. Arkell.

He opened his lips to speak, but recollected himself before the hasty impulse was put in force. Mrs. Dundyke noticed nothing unusual; her eyes and her thoughts were alike absorbed in the past.

"Will you describe this Mr. Hardcastle to me?" he asked presently, breaking the pause of silence: "as accurately and minutely as you can."

He noted every point that she gave in answer, every little detail. And he came to the conclusion that if Benjamin Carr was not Mr. Hardcastle, he might certainly have sat for his portrait.

"Unfortunately," said Mr. Arkell, speaking more to himself than to her, "were this man apprehended and punished, it could not bring poor Mr. Dundyke back to life."

"Alas no, it could not. I would almost rather let things remain as they are. If the man is guilty, his daily life must be one perpetual, ever-present punishment."

"Ay, indeed," murmured Mr. Arkell; "better leave him to it."

And he rather persistently, had her suspicions

been awakened, led the conversation into other channels.

"Let me say to you what I chiefly came to say, Betsey," he whispered to Mrs. Dundyke in parting. "This has been a sudden and unexpected blow for you. I do not know how you may be left in regard to means; but if you have need of help, temporary or otherwise, you will let me know it. I have a right to give it, you know: you are Charlotte's sister."

The tears fell from her eyes on his hands as she pressed them gratefully in hers. She did not say how well she was left off, for her heart was full; she only thanked him, and intimated that she had enough.

Mr. Arkell went away in a sort of perplexed dream. *Could* that suspicion of Benjamin Carr be a true one? *He* would be silent; but it was nearly certain to come out in some other way: murder generally does. From Mrs. Dundyke's he went straight up to Lady Dewsbury's, and found that she and Miss Arkell had again gone out of town. It was a disappointment; he had not seen Mildred for years and years.

Mrs. Carr came back to the room, and resumed her occupation after he had gone—that of searching amid the papers in the desk of the late Robert Carr the elder. It had proved to be his own desk

that her husband had wanted her to bring over —but that is of no consequence. She was searching for a very simple thing—merely a receipt for a small sum of money which she had herself paid for Mr. Carr just before he died, and had returned the receipt to him; but it is often upon the merest trifles that the great events of life turn. The claim for this small sum she heard was sent in again, and she thought perhaps she might find the receipt in the desk, where Mr. Carr had sometimes used to place such papers. She did not find that, but she found something else.

Mrs. Dundyke was sitting by, between the other side of the table and the fire. She was talking about the Arkells—the kindly generosity of William, the selfishness and persistent ill-will of Charlotte.

"And the children?" asked Mrs. Carr, as she stood, opening paper after paper. "Do they follow their father or mother in their treatment of you?"

"Of the daughters I know little; I may say nothing. They have never noticed me, even by a message. But the son—ah! you should know Travice Arkell! I cannot tell you how I love him. Will you believe that Charlotte——What is the matter?"

Emma Carr had come upon a sealed letter in an old blotting-book. The superscription was in the

hand-writing of her father-in-law, and ran as follows:—"To my son Robert. Not to be opened until after the death of my father, Marmaduke Carr."

She uttered the exclamation which had attracted the attention of Mrs. Dundyke, and sat down on her chair. With a prevision that this letter had something to do with the question of the marriage, she tore the letter open and sat gazing on it spell-bound.

"Have you found the receipt, my dear?"

Not the receipt. With her cheeks flushing, her pulses quickening, her hands trembling, she laid the letter open before Mrs. Dundyke. "Robert was right; Robert was right! Oh! if he had but lived to read this! How could he have overlooked this, when he examined the desk after his father's death? It must have slipped between the leaves of the blotting-book, and been hidden there."

"My dear Son Robert,—There may arise a question of your legitimacy when the time shall arrive for you to take possession of your grandfather's property. On the day I left Westerbury for ever, I married your mother, Martha Ann Hughes—she would not else have come with me. We were married in her parish church at Westerbury, St. James the-Less, and you will find it duly entered in

the register. This will be sufficient to prove your rights, so that there may be no litigation.

"Your affectionate father,

"Rt. Carr."

And, scarcely knowing whether she was awake or dreaming, while Mrs. Dundyke, in vain attempted to recover her astonishment, Mrs. Carr wrote a line of explanation inside an envelope, and despatched the all-important document to Westerbury to Mr. Fauntleroy.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. RICHARDS' MORNING CALL.

Mr. Fauntleroy was seated at breakfast, when this missive reached him. His two strapping daughters were with him: buxom, vulgar damsels, attired this morning in Magenta skirts and straw-coloured jackets. Mrs. Fauntleroy had been some years dead, and they ruled the house, and nearly ruled the lawyer. Strong-willed man though he was, carrying things out of doors with an iron hand, and sometimes a coarse one, he would yield to domestic tyranny; as many another has to do, if it were but known. It was fond tyranny, however, here; for whatever may have been the faults of the Miss Fauntleroys, they loved their father with a tender love. They were the only children of the lawyer—his co-heiresses—and to him they were as the apple of his eye.

The room they sat in faced the garden—a large fine garden at the back of the house. The leaves were red with the glowing tints of autumn, and as

Mr. Fauntleroy looked up from his well-covered breakfast-table at the October sky, he made some remark upon the famous run the hounds would make; and a half sigh escaped his lips that his own hunting days were gone for ever.

"Would you be afraid to ride now, pa?"

"Look at my weight, Lizzy."

"I think some who ride are as heavy as you," was Miss Elizabeth's answer.

"Ah! but they are used to it; they have kept the practice up. Never a better follower than I in my younger days—always in at the death—but that's a long while ago now. I gave up hunting when I settled down. What d'ye call that, Bab?"

He was pointing with his fork to a dish apart. Miss Barbara looked at it critically, and did not recognise it. "I dare say it's some dish the new cook has sent up. It looks nice, pa."

"Hand some of it over, then," said Mr. Fauntleroy.

She helped him plentifully. The lawyer and his daughters were all fond of nice dishes, and liked good servings of them; as perhaps their large frames and their high colours testified. Miss Lizzy pushed up her plate.

"I'll take some, too, Bab."

"About that pic-nic, pa? Are we——"

"Oh! I don't know," interrupted the lawyer, with his mouth full. "You girls are always bothering

for something of the sort. Get it up if you like, only don't expect me to go."

"The Arkells will joins us, pa; Bab has asked them."

"Of course," said the lawyer with a loud laugh. "She'd not fail to ask *them*. How was Mr. Travice, Bab?"

"I shan't tell you, pa," answered Miss Bab, tossing her head in demonstrative indignation, though her whole face beamed with a gratified smile. "The idea! How should I know anything about Mr. Travice Arkell!"

"A good-looking young fellow," said the lawyer, significantly. "Perhaps others may be finding him so as well as you, Bab."

"Pa, then, you are a stupid! And I want to know who it is that's coming to dinner to-day?"

"Coming to dinner to-day, Bab? Nobody that I know of."

"You said last night you had invited somebody, but you went to sleep when I asked who."

"Oh! I remember. I met him yesterday, and he said he was going to call to-day. I told him to come in and dine, if he liked. It's Ben Carr."

"Oh!" said Miss Bab, with a depreciating sniff. "Only Ben Carr!"

"He's over here for a few days, stopping with Mrs. Lewis. He wants to be off to Australia or

some place, but the squire turns crusty about advancing the funds. Ben and he came to an explosion over it, and Ben has made himself scarce at home in consequence. What's the time, Bab ?"

Barbara Fauntleroy glanced over her father's head at the French clock behind him. "It's twenty-five minutes after nine, pa."

"Eh !" cried the lawyer, starting up. "Why, what a time I have been at breakfast ! You girls should not keep me with your chatter."

He gathered up his letters, which lay in a stack beside him, and hastened into his office. The head clerk, Kenneth, was in the outer room, with one of the other clerks, a young man named Omer. Mr. Fauntleroy went in to ask a question.

"Have those deeds come in yet from the engrosser's, Kenneth ?"

"No, sir."

"Not come ! Why they promised them for nine o'clock this morning, and now it's half-past. Go for them yourself, Kenneth, at once, and give them a word of a sort. It's not the first time by many that they've been behindhand."

Mr. Kenneth took his hat and went out; and his master shut himself in his private room and began to open his letters. Sometimes he opened his letters at breakfast time, at others he carried them, as now, into the office.

Amidst these letters was the envelope despatched by Mrs. Carr, containing the important letter found in the desk. To describe Mr. Fauntleroy's astonishment when he read it, would be beyond mortal pen. To think that they should have been looking half over the world for this marriage record, when it was lying quietly under their very nose!

"By George!" exclaimed Mr. Fauntleroy. "A clever trick, though, of Robert Carr's—if he *did* so marry her. The secret was well kept. He would be sure we should suspect any place rather than Westerbury." "Omer!" he called out aloud.

The clerk came in, in answer, and stood before the table of Mr. Fauntleroy.

"Go down to St. James-the-Less, and look through the register. See if there's a marriage entered between Robert Carr and—what was the girl's christian name?—Martha Ann Hughes. Stop a minute, I'll give you the date of the year. And—Omer—keep a silent tongue in your head."

Mr. Fauntleroy nodded significantly, and his clerk went out, knowing what that mandate meant, and that it might not be disobeyed. He came back after a while and went in to Mr. Fauntleroy.

"Well?" said the latter, looking up eagerly.

"It is there, sir."

"By George!" repeated the lawyer. "Only to think of that! That's all, Omer," he added, after

a pause. "Mr. Kenneth wants you. And mind what I charged you as to a silent tongue."

"No fear, sir," said Omer, as he retired. And to give him his due there was no fear. One clerk had been discharged from Mr. Fauntleroy's office six months before, some tattling having been traced back to him; but Omer was of a silent nature, and cautious besides.

"I shall never be surprised at anything again," soliloquized Mr. Fauntleroy. "A week longer, and I should have thrown up the cause, unless the Holland Carrs had come forward with money. Won't I go on with it now! But—I suppose—" he continued more slowly, and in due deliberation, "the cause will be at an end now. Old Carr can't hold out in the face of this. Shall *I* tell of it? If I don't—and they don't else come to know of it—and the cause goes on, there'll be a pretty picking for both sides; and old Carr can afford it, for it's his pocket that will have to stand costs now. I'm not obliged to tell them; and I *won't*," concluded Mr. Fauntleroy.

But this little cunning plan of secresy on the part of Mr. Fauntleroy was destined to be defeated. Mynn and Mynn, the solicitors of Eckford, were in negotiation with a gentleman in London to take the head of their office, and act as its chief during their own frequent absence. This gentleman, by

one of those coincidences that arise in this world, to help our projects or baffle them, as the case may be, happened to be Mr. Littelby. The negotiation had been opened for some little time, and was only waiting for a personal interview for completion ; Mr. Littelby himself being rather anxious for it, as it held out greater advantages than he enjoyed in his present post, one of which was a possible partnership. Mr. George Mynn made a journey to London to see him ; and while he was gone, it chanced that the clerk, Richards, had occasion to see Mr. Fauntleroy.

He, Richards, arrived in Westerbury betimes on this same morning, and was told by Kenneth that he might go in to Mr. Fauntleroy. Richards found, however, that the room was empty ; Mr. Fauntleroy having quitted it for an instant, leaving the inner door ajar.

The morning's letters, open, lay in a stack on the table, one upon another, faces upwards. Mr. Richards, a prying man, with a curiosity as sharp as his nose, and both were sharp as a needle, saw these letters, and took the liberty of bending his body forward from the spot where he stood, to bring his eyes within range of their contents. He read the first, which did him no good whatever ; and then gently lifted it an inch slant-wise with his thumb and finger, and so came to the second. That

likewise afforded him scant gratification; for it did not concern him at all, or any business with which he could possibly be connected, and he lifted it gingerly and came to the third. The third was the all-important letter of the deceased Robert Carr; and Mr. Richards read it with devouring eyes.

He did not care to go on now to the other letters. *This* was enough; and he regaled himself with a second perusal. A faint foot-fall in the passage warned him, and Mr. Richards stole away from danger.

Mr. Fauntleroy entered, coming bustling in by the door he had left ajar. Surprised perhaps to see the room tenanted which he had left empty, he glanced at his letters. Thought is quick. They were lying in the stack just as he had placed them, certainly undisturbed for any sign they gave; and the visitor was sitting yards off, in a remote chair behind the other door, his legs crossed and his hat held on his knees.

"Ah, Richards! you are here early this morning!"

"I was obliged to come early, sir, to get back in time," said Richards as he rose. "Mr. Mynn is ill, as usual, and Mr. George went to London yesterday afternoon; so the office is left to me."

"Gone to engage his new clerk, isn't he?" asked Mr. Fauntleroy, who had no more objection than

Richards to hear somewhat of his neighbours' business.

"I believe so; gone to see him, at all events," replied Richards, speaking with scant ceremony; but it was in his nature so to do. "They want him to come next month, I hear."

"What's his name?"

"Littelton, or Littelby, or some such name. I heard them talking of him in their room. We are going to have a busy winter of it, Mr. Fauntleroy," continued the candid Richards, brushing a speck off his hat; "so the governors want the new man to come to us next month, or in December at latest. We have three causes already on hand for the spring assizes."

"That's pretty well for your quiet folks," returned Mr. Fauntleroy, as he sat down and placed a large weight on the stack of letters. "Whose are they?"

"Well, there's that old-standing cause of the Whitcombs, the remanet from last assizes; and there's a new one that I suppose I must not talk about: it's a breach of trust affair, and our side want it kept close, meaning to have a try at going in for a compromise, which they'll never get: and then there's your cause, Carr *versus* Carr. But, Mr. Fauntleroy, surely you'll never bring that into court! you *can't* win, you know."

Mr. Fauntleroy's eyes rested lovingly for a mo-

ment on the stack of letters. "If clients are sanguine without reasonable cause, we can't help it you know, Richards."

"Well, how those Holland Carrs *can* be sanguine bangs me hollow!" was the retort of Mr. Richards. "They've never had the ghost of a case from the first. I was dining at the old squire's on Sunday again, and we got talking of it. The old man was saying he thought the Carrs over in Holland must be mad, to persist risking their money in this way; and so they must be. There never could have been any marriage, Mr. Fauntleroy: I dare say you feel as sure of it as everybody else does."

Mr. Fauntleroy shrugged his huge shoulders. "The clergyman is dead; and the rest may not be so sanguine as he was. I confess I did think him a little mad. And now to your business, Richards. I suppose you have come about that tithe affair. Will Kenneth do for you? I am busy this morning."

"Kenneth won't do until I have had a word with yourself, and shown you a paper," replied Richards, taking out his letter-case. "Just look at that, Mr. Fauntleroy."

Mr. Fauntleroy unfolded the paper handed to him. It had nothing to do with our history; but he apparently found it so interesting or important,

that Richards was not dismissed for nearly an hour. And at his departure, to make up for lost time, Mr. Fauntleroy set to work with a will: one of his first tasks being to drop a line to Mrs. Carr, acknowledging the receipt of the important letter, and cautioning her to keep the discovery a strict secret. All unconscious, as he was, that one had seen it in his own office.

Mr. Richards was scuttering along the street to the railway station, when he encountered Benjamin Carr. He could hardly stop to speak, for his own office really wanted him. In the past few weeks, since their first introduction, he and Benjamin Carr had been a great deal together, and the latter placed himself right in his path.

"I can't stay a minute, Ben,"—they had grown familiar, as you perceive,—"I shall lose the train."

Benjamin Carr turned, and stepped out alongside him, with a pace as quick. He began telling him, as they walked, of an outbreak he had had with the "old man," as he was pleased to call his father. "It was all about this money," exclaimed Ben. "He refuses to give me any until this affair is settled; persists in saying he may lose the inheritance: altogether we got in a passion, both of us. As if he *could* lose it!"

"I suppose it is within the range of possibility," said Richards.

"Nonsense!" replied Benjamin Carr. "You'll say there was a marriage next."

"There might have been."

"Pigs might fly."

"Suppose there *was* a marriage—and that it can be proved? What then?"

"Suppose there wasn't," wrathfully returned Ben Carr. "I'm not in a mood for joking, Richards."

They stepped on to the platform. The train was not in yet; was scarcely due: one of the porters remarked that "that there mid-day train didn't keep her time as well as some on 'em did." Richards familiarly passed his arm within Benjamin Carr's, and drew him beyond the platform. They turned sideways and halted before a dwarf wall, looking over it at the town, which lay beneath.

"You say you are not in a mood for joking, Ben: neither am I; and what I said to you I said with a meaning," began Richards in a low tone. "It has come to my knowledge—and you needn't ask me how or when or where, for I shan't tell you—that old Marmaduke's money, so far as you Eckford Carrs go, *is* imperilled. If the thing goes on to trial, you'll lose it: but I should think it won't go on to trial, for you'd never let it when you come to know what I know. The other side has got hold of a piece of evidence that would swamp you."

Benjamin Carr's great dark eyes turned themselves

fiercely upon his companion: he saw that he was, in truth, not jesting. "It's not there cord of the marriage, is it?" he asked, after a pause.

"Something like it."

Not a word was spoken for a couple of minutes. A little tinkling bell was heard in the station. Benjamin Carr broke the silence.

"Real, or forged?"

"Ah, I don't know. Real, I suppose. The man's dead you see, that young clergyman-fellow who came down, so he'd be hardly likely to get it up. I don't see how it could be done, either, in the present case. It's easier to suppress evidence of a marriage than it is to invent it. Still it *may* be on the cross."

"Can't you speak plain English, Richards."

"I hardly dare. But I suppose you could be silent, if I were to."

"I suppose I could. I have had secrets to carry in my lifetime weightier than this, whatever it may be."

Benjamin Carr lifted his hat, and wiped his brow with his handkerchief, as if the secrets were there and felt heavy still. Richards looked at him.

"You may speak out, Richards. You can't believe," he added, his tone changed to one of passionate pain, "that it is not safe with me."

"It must be kept safe for your own sake, for your family's sake. If any evidence *has* turned up, there's no cause to let the world know it before you are compelled. It would be damaging your cause irreparably."

Ben Carr nodded assent. "What is it?" he asked.

"Well, I think they have found out where the marriage was solemnized. I *think* so, mind; I am not positive. That is, I am not positive of the fact; only that they think it so."

"How did you hear it?"

"Now, Ben, you'll not get me to let out that. I've said so. Perhaps I dreamt it; perhaps a little bird told me: never mind. I mean to go over to your place to see Valentine to-night, and drop him a hint of the state of affairs. Shall you be at home?"

"I didn't mean to be at home for some days to come; but I'll meet you there. Take care of one thing: that you say nothing to the squire."

Mr. Richards gave a knowing nod sideways, as if to intimate that he knew just as well what to do and what not to do as Benjamin Carr. Just then the noise of a train was heard puffing up.

"Here it comes, Richards."

"Here it doesn't," was the reply. "It's coming the wrong way. This is the London train coming in."

The train came in, and stopped on the other side

the platform, while it discharged its passengers and any luggage pertaining to them. It then went puffing on, and the passengers crossed the line to this side, as they had to do before they could leave the station. Benjamin Carr and his friend stood still to look at them, and the former recognised in one of them Mr. Arkell.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Arkell," said Ben, holding out his hand. "Been out anywhere?"

But Mr. Arkell did not see the hand. What with the jostling crowd, what with a small portmanteau he was carrying, what with wondering who the stranger might be, hanging lovingly on Ben's arm, for Mr. Arkell had not the honour of knowing Mr. Richards by sight, he certainly did not appear to see the held-out hand. "Where have you been?" inquired Ben, inquisitively.

"I have been to London, Mr. Benjamin, as you wish to know. A short visit, though."

"Oh," said Ben, meaning to be jocular. "Seen any of my friends there?"

"I saw Mrs. Carr, the clergyman's young widow: I don't know whether you count her as one of your friends. And I saw Mrs. Dundyke."

There was a look in Mr. Arkell's face, not usual on it: a peculiar, solemn, penetrating look. Somehow Mr. Ben Carr's jocularity and his courage went out of him together.

"Mrs. Dundyke?" he repeated, vaguely, staring over the heads of the passing passengers. "Oh, ah, I remember, that connexion of yours. I don't know her."

"I got her to give me a description of the man, calling himself Hardcastle, who lies under the suspicion of knowing rather too clearly what became of Mr. Dundyke. Poor Robert Carr, just dead, attempted the description of him, you may remember, at your father's table."

"Ah; yes," said Ben, striving to be more vague than before: and his dark face perceptibly changed its hue.

"And I may tell you that this description of Mrs. Dundyke's has made a singular impression upon me, and a very disagreeable one. It is not my affair," he added, slowly and distinctly; "and for the present I shall not make it mine: but——"

"Here's your train, Richards. Got a return ticket?"

The two walked forward to meet it, Richards evidently pulled along by his companion. The train came dashing in too far, and had to be backed: porters ran about, departing passengers hustled each other. And altogether, in the general confusion, there was no more to be seen of Mr. Benjamin Carr.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DISLIKE THAT WAS TO BEAR ITS FRUITS.

THE information, hinted at by Miss Beauclerc to Henry Arkell, had proved to be correct—the dean and chapter purposed to hold an examination of the college school.

To describe the consternation this caused would be difficult. It fell, not only upon the boys, but on the masters, like a clap of thunder: indeed the former cared for it the least. That the school was not in a state, in regard to its proficiency of study, to bear an examination, was a fact known to nearly everybody; and the head master, had it been possible, would have resisted the fiat of the dean.

In point of fact, the school had become notorious for its inefficiency. The old days of confining the boys' studies exclusively to Latin and Greek were over; but the additional branches inaugurated could scarcely be said to have begun. The masters, wedded to the old system, did not take to them kindly; the boys did not, of their own will, take to

them at all. They could not spell; they knew nothing of English grammar, except what they could pick up of it through their acquaintance with the Latin; they hardly knew a single event in English, French, or modern history; and of geography they were intensively ignorant. What could be expected? For years and years, for many hours a day, had these boys been kept to work, always at the old routine work, Latin and Greek. Examine them in these classics, and Mr. Wilberforce would have no reason to complain of his pupils; but in all else a charity boy could beat them. Had one of those college boys been required to write a letter in English, every other word in it would have been spelled incorrectly. I am giving you a true account of the state of the school at that period: and I fear that you will scarcely believe it. A few of the boys, a very few, only some three or four, had been generally well educated; but these owed it to the care, the forethought, perhaps the *means* of their parents: home tutors were expensive.

As Miss Beauclerc had said, it was in consequence of a letter, written by one of the senior boys, that this trouble had come about. It was a disgraceful letter — speaking in reference to its spelling and composition—neither more nor less. The letter had been brought under the astonished eyes of one of the chapter, and he showed it to

the dean. They awoke from their supineness, and much indignation at the young scholar was privately expressed. What *did* they expect? Did they think spelling came to the boys intuitively, as pecking at grain does to birds? It may be said that the boys ought to have been able to spell correctly before entering the school, and to have possessed some other general learning; that the parents ought to have taken care of that. But "ought" does not go for much in this world. Many of the boys were indulged children who had never been brought on at all, except in reading, and that was essential, or they could not be admitted; and, at that time, they entered young—nine years old. As they went in, little ignoramuses, so they remained, except in the classics. Many a boy has gone from that school to the university not educated at all, save in the dead languages.

Of course, when the innovation (as the masters regarded it) came in, a little stir was caused. A pretence was made of teaching the school foreign branches, such as spelling and geography; but whether it might be owing to the innate prejudice of their masters, or to their own stupidity, little, if any, progress was made. The boys remained lamentably deficient; and they thought it no shame to be so. Rather the contrary, in fact; for a

feeling grew up in the school that these common branches of learning were not essential to them as gentlemen; that it was derogatory altogether to a foundation school to have them introduced. The masters had winked at this state of things, and they perhaps did not know how intensely ignorant some of their best classical scholars were.

It may be imagined, therefore, what the consternation was when the dean's announcement was received early in August. There was to be an examination held; but not until November; so the boys and the masters had three months to prepare. It's true you cannot convert ignorant boys into finished scholars in three months, however humble may be the attainments required; but you may do something towards it by means of drilling. So the boys, to their intense disgust, were drilled late and early—and that disgust did not render their apprehensions the quicker.

Amidst the very few who need not fear that, or any other examination, was Henry Arkell. He was not yet a senior boy (speaking of the four seniors), but he was by far the best scholar in the school. He owed this chiefly to his father. Mr. Peter Arkell was so finished a scholar himself, it had been strange indeed if he had not sought to render his son one; and Henry's abilities were of a most superior order. Indeed—but that a sort

of prejudice exists against these clever lads, I could say a great deal more of his abilities, his attainments, than I mean to say—for this is no fictitious history. Intellectual, clever, good, refined, sensitive, Henry Arkell seemed to be one of those superior spirits not meant for this world. The event too often proves that they were not meant for it.

He was not a favourite in the school, except with a few. By the majority he was intensely disliked. The dislike arose from envy, and his own gifts excited it. His unusual beauty, his sensitive temperament, his refinement of manner, his ever-pervading sense of religion, his honourable nature, as seen in even the smallest action,—all and each of them were objectionable to the rough schoolboys. Most of these qualities he had inherited from his mother, and for any one of them, the school, as a whole, would have ridiculed and despised him. They would have been quite enough without his superior advancement; which put *them* to the shame, and called forth now and again some stinging comparison from the lips of the head master. When he first entered the school, he had unintentionally excited the ill-will of the two sons of Mrs. Lewis, and of their chosen companions, the two Aultanes. These boys longed above everything to thrash him every day of their lives;

but he had been taken under the protection of Mr. St. John and Travice Arkell, and they dared not, and it did not increase their love for him.

But there was to arise a worse cause of enmity than any of these, as Henry grew older, and *that* was the favour shown him by the dean's daughter. To see him under the especial favour of the dean was aggravation enough; but that was as nothing compared to the intimacy accorded him by the dean's daughter. You know what these things are with schoolboys. Half the school believed themselves in love with this attractive girl, who condescended to freedom with them; the other half *were* in love with her. After their fashion, you know. It was not that serious love that makes or mars the heart for all time, though the boys might think it so. Lewis senior—his name was Roland, and he was one of the four senior boys — was especially envious of this favour of Miss Beauclerc's. He was very fond of her, and would have given all he possessed in the world for it to be accorded to him. *He* could only love and admire her at a distance; while Arkell might tell it to her face if he pleased—and Lewis felt sure he *did*. He hated Henry with a passionate hatred. He saw, with that intuition natural to these things, that Henry loved Georgina Beauclerc, and with no passing schoolboy's love. He wished that the

earth contained only their three selves, that he might set upon the fragile boy and kill him, and keep the young lady to himself ever afterwards—Adam and Eve in a second Paradise. Indeed, Mr. Lewis had got into a habit of indulging this train of thought rather more than was wholesome for him, and would have shot Henry Arkell in a duel with all the non-compunction in the world.

Not being able to do this—for the human race could not be exterminated so easily, and duels are not in fashion—he made up for the disappointment by rendering Henry Arkell's life as miserable as it is well possible for one boy to render another's. He excited the school against him; he openly derided the position and known poverty of his father, Peter Arkell; and he positively affected to rebel—he would have rebelled had he dared—when Henry came to reside temporarily in the head master's house. The scholars in that house had hitherto been gentlemen, he said, loudly. Indeed, but for one fortunate circumstance, Henry's life at the master's might have been rendered nearly unbearable; and this was, that he was in favour with the senior boy—an idle, gentlemanly fellow of the name of Jocelyn. So long as Jocelyn remained in the school, there could be no very undue open oppression put upon Henry Arkell. It was not that the head boy held Henry in any especial

favour; but he was of too just a nature, too much the gentleman in ideas and habits, to permit cruelty or unfairness of any sort. But you have now heard enough to gather that Henry Arkell was not in favour with the majority of the college boys, his fellows; and you hear its causes.

The cramming that the boys were now subjected to, did not improve their temper. Unfortunately, the dean had not specified—perhaps purposely—what would be the branches chosen for examination. Mr. Wilberforce and the under masters presumed that it would chiefly lie in the classics, and, so far, were tolerably easy; but the result of this was, that the Latin and Greek lessons were increased, leaving less time for what they were pleased to consider inferior studies.

"Suppose," suggested the second master, one day, "it should be in those other studies that the dean purposes to examine them?"

Mr. Wilberforce turned purple.

"In *those!*—to the exclusion of the higher! Nonsense! It is not likely. The boys will cut a pretty figure if he should."

"The fact is, they are such a dull lot."

"Most of them: yes. I think, Mr. Roberts, you had better hold some dictation classes; and we'll get in a few conspicuous maps."

But all the studies that came in addition, whether

dictation classes or the staring at maps, the boys resented wofully; and though they were obliged to submit, it did not, I say, improve their temper. One afternoon in October; when everything seemed to have gone wrong, and the school rather wished, on the whole, that they had never been born, or that books had not been invented, or that they were private pupils of the head master's (for *they* were not to be included in the examination, only the forty foundation boys, the king's scholars), the school was waiting impatiently to hear half-past four strike, for then only another half-hour must elapse before they would be released from school. The choristers had come in at four o'clock from service with the head master, whose week it was for chanting, and had settled down to their respective desks. Henry Arkell, who was at the first desk now, but nothing like its head, for promotion in the school was not attained by proficiency, but by priority of entrance, had come in with the rest; he was senior chorister now, and was seated bending over a book, his head half buried between his raised hands, and his elbows on the desk.

"What are you conning there so attentively, Mr. Arkell?"

The authoritative words came from Lewis. He was monitor that week, and therefore head of all

the school, under the senior boy: his present position on the rolls was that of fourth senior.

"I'm reading Greek," replied Henry, without removing his hands or looking up. "I've done my lessons."

"Take your hands and elbows down. I should like to see."

Down went the hands and elbows, but he did not look up.

"I thought it might be an English comedy instead of a Greek tragedy," observed Lewis, satirically; "but it *is* Greek, I see. Boys, he's reading Greek! He's thinking to take the shine out of us at the examination. Preparing! Oh!"

"Not at all," said Henry, quietly. "I should have been as well prepared for the examination at a day's notice, as I am after nearly three months'. So might you have been if you'd chosen."

"You insolent young beggar! Do you mean to say I am not prepared?"

"I said nothing of the sort, Lewis."

"You implied it, though. *You* needn't think to get the prize—if it's true that the dean gives one."

"I don't think to get it. I wish you'd let me go on with my book."

"Oh yes, you do. You think to creep up the dean's sleeve, at second hand, through somebody

that's a friend of yours; or that you are presumptuous enough to fancy is."

He understood the allusion, and suddenly raised his hands again, for the delicate hue of his transparent cheek changed to crimson. Lewis noted the movement.

"Now, by Jove, I'll put you up for punishment. I order your elbows off the desk, and you fling them on again in defiance. Wilberforce has flogged for less."

"Be quiet, Lewis," interposed Jocelyn. "Arkell's doing nothing that you need trouble him for. Just turn your attention to that second desk, and see what's going on there. They'll get Mr. Wilberforce's eyes upon them directly."

Lewis could have found in his heart to hang the senior boy. He was always interfering with him in this manner whenever he was monitor, to the detriment of his dignity as such. Lewis immediately struck up a wordy war, until the master's attention was excited and he commanded silence.

Oh, if this dislike of Henry Arkell had but died out at first! half this history would not then have been written. It might have done so under different circumstances; it might, perhaps, have done so but for the dean's daughter. From the very first hour that she knew him, Georgina Beauclerc made no secret of her liking. When she met the college

boys, child though she was then, she would single him out from the rest, and stop talking to him. Her governess used to look defiance, but that made not the least impression on Miss Beauclerc. She invited him to the deanery; *they* never were allowed to put their noses inside it, except at those odd moments when they went to solicit the dean to allow them holiday from the cathedral; she would pass them sometimes without the slightest notice in the world, but she never so passed *him*.

If he had but been a dull, stupid, clumsy boy! Strange though it may seem, the rest hated him because he did his lessons. *Their* tasks were hurried over, imperfectly learnt at the best, if at all, and were generally concluded with a caning. His were always perfectly and efficiently done. They called him hard names for this; prig, snob, sneak; but, in point of fact, the boy was never allowed the opportunity of *not* doing them, for his father on that score was a martinet, and drilled him at home just as much as Mr. Wilberforce did at school. And, greatest of all advantages, his early education had been so comprehensive and sound. The horribly hard lessons, that were as death to the rest, seemed but play to him; and the natural consequence was, that the envy boiled over. Circumstances, in this point of view, were not favourable to him.

The long afternoon came to an end, five o'clock struck, and the boys clattered down the broad schoolroom steps, making the grounds and the old cloisters echo with their noise. There had been little time for play latterly; since the announcement of the forthcoming examination, the head and other masters had been awfully exacting on the subject of lessons, not to be trifled with. Henry Arkell, from the state of preparation in which he always was, had nearly as much time on his hands as usual, and had not ceased to take his lessons on the organ, or to practise on it twice a week, as was his custom. He learnt of the cathedral organist, Mr. Paul; for Mrs. Peter Arkell had deemed it well that Henry's great taste for music should continue to be cultivated. Another of the boys, named Robbins, a private pupil of the head master's, also learnt. The organist would not allow them to touch the noted cathedral instrument, save in his presence; and they were permitted by Mr. Wilberforce to practise in the church of St. James the Less, of which, as you may remember, he was the incumbent. One of the minor canons invariably held this living, for it was in the gift of the Dean and Chapter.

Henry was going there to practise this evening. He was at the house of the head master yet; his friends being still absent from Westerbury, for the

family who had taken their house wished to remain in it until Christmas. The sea-side was doing Mrs. Peter Arkell a vast deal of good; her husband had obtained some teaching there, and Mr. Wilberforce had kindly intimated that Henry was welcome to remain with him a twelvemonth, if it suited their plans that he should; but the boy was beginning to long for them back with an intense longing.

He walked across the grounds to the master's house; put down his books, got his music, and went on towards the church of St. James the Less. It was a large, ancient church, with thick walls and little windows, and it stood all solitary by itself, in the midst of its churchyard, beyond the town on that side, but not many minutes' walk from the cathedral. The only house near it was the clerk's, and that not close to it: a poor, low, damp, aguish building, surrounded by grass as long as that in the neighbouring graveyard. The clerk was a bent, withered old man, always complaining of rheumatism; he had been clerk of that church now for many years.

Once beyond the grounds, Henry Arkell set off at his utmost speed. The evenings were growing dusk early, and Mr. Wilberforce allowed no light in the church, so he had to make the most of the daylight. He was flying past the palmery, when

in making a dexterous spring to avoid a truck of apples standing there, he let his roll of music fly out of his hand; and it was in turning to pick up this that his eyes caught sight of a tall form at the palmery door; a distinguished, noble-looking young man, whose deep blue eyes were gazing at him in doubt. One moment's hesitation, on Henry's part, and he made but a step towards him.

"Oh, Mr. St. John! I did not know you were back."

"I thought it was certainly you, Harry, but your height puzzled me. How you have grown!"

Henry laughed. They say I bid fair to be as tall as my cousin Travice. I hope I shan't be as tall as papa! When did you come home, Mr. St. John?"

"Now: an hour ago. I am going to look in at the deanery. Will you come with me, lest I should have forgotten the way?"

It was not often that Henry Arkell put aside duty for pleasure; he had been too well trained for that; but this temptation was irresistible. What would he not have put aside for the sake of seeing Georgina Beauclerc; and, it may be, that that wild suspicion of where Georgina's love was given, made him wish to witness the meeting.

A couple of minutes brought them to the deanery. St. John's joke of not finding the way

might have some point in it, for he had been absent at least two years. In the room where you first saw her, gliding softly over the carpet with a waltzing step, was Georgina Beauclerc; and close to the window, listlessly looking out, sat a young lady of delicate beauty, one of the fairest girls it was ever Mr. St. John's lot to look upon. But this was not the first time he had seen her. It was the dean's niece, Sarah Beauclerc.

Henry was in the room first; St. John pushed him on, and followed him; he was in time therefore to see the momentary suspense, the start of surprise, the deep glow of crimson, of love, that rushed over the face of Georgina. Was it at himself, or at *him?* But never yet, so far as Henry saw, had that crimson hue dyed her face at his own approach.

One moment, and she had recovered herself. She went up to Mr. St. John with an outstretched hand, bantering words on her tongue.

"So you really are alive! We thought you had been buried in the Red Sea."

He made some laughing answer, and passed on to Sarah Beauclerc. He clasped both her hands in his; he bent over her with only a word or two of greeting, his low voice subdued to tenderness. What did it mean? Georgina's lips turned white as ashes, but she could not see her cousin's face.

"How is Mrs. Beauclerc?" asked St. John, turning, and beginning to talk generally; "Harry tells me that the dean is well, to the consternation of the college school, which has to prepare itself for an examination."

"Oh, that examination!" laughed Georgina; "it is turning some of their senses upside down. But now," she added, standing in front of Mr. St. John, "what am I to call you? Frederick?—Or am I to be formal, and say 'Mr. St. John?'"

"You used to call me Fred."

"But I was not a grown-up young lady then," making him a mock curtsey; "after all, I suppose I must call you Fred still, for I should be sure to lapse into it. Where have you been all this while? We have heard of you everywhere; in Paris, in Madrid, in Vienna, in Rome, in Antwerp, in—— oh, all over the world."

"I think I have been nearly all over Europe," said Mr. St. John.

"Which of us has the most changed?" she abruptly asked, a curl of the finger indicating that she meant to speak of her cousin.

"Sarah has not changed," he answered, turning to Sarah Beauclerc, and an involuntary tenderness was again perceptible in his tone. "You have not changed either, Georgie, in manner," he added, with a laugh.

Georgina pouted. "You are not to call me 'Georgie' any longer, Mr. St. John."

"Very well, Miss Beauclerc, our careless times have gone for ever, I suppose; old age is creeping upon us."

"Don't be stupid," said Georgina. "Have you seen Lady Anne since your return?"

"Yes."

"You *have!*" she exclaimed, not expecting the answer.

"I saw her in London, as I came through it."

"Ah—yes—of course, I might have guessed that," was Georgina's rejoinder, spoken mysteriously. "Shall we have a battle royal?"

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. St. John.

"Between Lady Anne and another; you can't cut yourself in two, you know. Sarah, what's the matter with your face?"

It was a very conscious face just then, and a very haughty one. St. John knitted his brows, as if he divined Georgina's meaning, and was angered at it; and he began speaking hastily.

"Mine has been one of the pleasantest of tours. The galleries of paintings alone would have been worth——"

"Now, Fred, if you begin upon that everlasting painting theme, you'll never leave off," unceremoniously interrupted Georgiana. "Mrs. St. John says paintings will be your ruin."

"Does she?"

"Your purse has a hole at both ends, she says, where pictures are concerned, and she wishes you had only a tithe of the prudence of Mr. Isaac St. John."

Another slight knit of the brows. Sarah Beauclerc went to a side table and opened a book of views, taken in Spain, artistic sketches, exquisitely done. She turned her fair face to Mr. St. John.

"Will you kindly tell me if these are correct, Mr. St. John? That is, if you are personally acquainted with the spots."

He needed no second invitation. He did know the spots, and they bent over the views together, St. John growing eloquent. Henry Arkell, tolerably at home at the deanery, had drawn away from the group and was touching the keys of the piano; some sweet, extemporized melody, played so softly that it could scarcely be heard. Suddenly he found Georgina at his side.

"What did I tell you?" she abruptly said.

"What did you tell me?" he replied. "I'm sure I don't know what you mean, Miss Beauclerc."

"Go on with your playing; why do you stop? I don't care to be heard by the chairs and tables. Did I not tell you that he was in love either with her or with her beauty? You see, and hear."

"Are you sure he is not in love with somebody

else ?" asked Henry, his heart beating with that wild tumult that it mostly did when in the presence of Miss Beauclerc.

She understood his meaning, however it might please her to affect not to do so. He did not raise his eyes to look at her; and he continued the soft sweet playing, as she desired.

"Somebody else! Do you mean Lady Anne ?"

"Oh, Miss Beauclerc! I was not thinking of Lady Anne."

"Perhaps you mean me, you stupid boy; perhaps you would like to insinuate that I am in love with him. You *are* stupid, Henry. Play a little louder. How I wish I played with half your taste. I should not get so much of old Paul's frownings and mamma's reproachings. Do you think I'd have Fred St. John ? No, not though he were worth his weight in gold. We should never get along together; you might as well try to mix oil and water."

Oh, false words! But how many such are uttered daily, in the natural reticence of the shy heart, loving for the first time! Henry Arkell believed her at the moment, and his heart bounded on in its wild love, in spite of that ever present conviction that had taken up an abode within it. The strain changed to a popular love melody; but the playing was soft and sweet as

before. Few have the charmed gift of playing as he played.

"I have been making something for you. I can't give it you now with those two pairs of eyes in the room. Lovers though they may be, I dare say they are watching; and Sarah's blue ones are very sharp. She might get telling mamma that I flirt with the college boys. And I won't give it you at all if you are stupid. What's Fred St. John to me, do you suppose? It's nothing really worth having, you know; but your vanity likes to be humoured, and——"

"Henry! how exquisitely you play!"

Mr. St. John was coming towards them with the remark, and the spell was broken. Henry rose from the piano, laughing carelessly in answer; and Frederick St. John wondered at the bright light in his eye, the flush of emotion on his cheek. But he did not read the signs correctly.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EXAMINATION.

NOVEMBER came in. The nineteenth approached, and the travelling carriages of the different prebendaries bowled into Westerbury, as was customary at that season, bringing their owners to their residences in the Grounds. A great day in cathedral life was the nineteenth of November. It was the grand chapter day; the day when every member attached to the cathedral had to attend in the chapter-house after morning prayers, and answer to their names, as called over from the roll by the chapter clerk. The dean, the canons, the minor canons, the king's scholars, the organist, the lay-clerks, the sextons, the vergers, the bedesmen, and the two men-cooks officiating for the audit dinners at the deanery; all had to be there, health permitting. It was also the grand audit day; and the first day of the series of dinners held at the deanery; the dinner on this day being confined to the members of the cathedral: that is, the clergy,

the choristers, and the lay-clerks. The rest of the boys, those who were only king's scholars, were not included, and very savage they were; but things were done in accordance with ancient custom. When the dean, at the conclusion of the ceremonies in the chapter-house, proffered an invitation to the "gentlemen choristers" to dine with him that evening at the deanery, and the gentlemen choristers bowed a gracious or a confused acquiescence, according to their state of nerves, the thirty king's scholars turned rampant with envy; and always wished either the choristers or the dean might come to some grief before the night arrived.

The great day came; an unusually great day, this, for the school, the examination having been fixed to take place on it by the dean. The morning service in the cathedral was at ten o'clock, the usual daily hour; and at eleven began the business in the chapter-house. Next came the examination. There had been some consultation between the dean and canons as to whether the examination should take place in the college hall, as the schoolroom was called, or the chapter-house; but they decided in favour of the college hall. As the boys were passing through the cloisters from the chapter-house on their way to it, walking orderly two and two in their surplices and trenchers, Georgina Beauclerc met them, her blue eyes smiling, the blue strings

of her bonnet flying. The undaunted girl stopped to have a word, although the clergy, with the dean at their head, were actually coming out of the chapter-house, within view.

"There *is* to be a prize, boys," she whispered. "Good luck to whoever gets it. Will it be you, Jocelyn?"

"That it will not, Miss Beauclerc," was the reply of the senior boy. None knew better than he his own deficiencies, and that they chiefly arose through his own idleness.

"Whose will it be, then?"

"Well, if it turns upon general scholarship it ought to be Arkell's no doubt, Miss Beauclerc, only you see he is not a senior. If we are examined in Greek and Latin only, the merit may lie between him and Lewis senior."

Lewis senior, a great big hulky fellow, with hair as black as his uncle Ben's, sly eyes, and an ugly face, was standing close to Jocelyn. Taking the classics only, he was the best scholar in the school, Henry Arkell excepted; but he was more than a year older than Henry. Miss Beauclerc saw his countenance light up with triumph, and she threw back her pretty head. She detested Lewis, though perfectly conscious that he entertained more than a liking for her.

"*You* won't have much chance, Lewis, by the side

of Arkell. Don't deceive yourself; don't faint with the disappointment."

She turned round and flew off, for the dean and clergy were close at hand. The boys continued their way to the college hall, Lewis's amiability not improved by the taunt. The general opinion in the school was, that if a prize was given, Lewis would gain it. He was a clever boy, though not popular; more clever than any one of the other seniors. Seniority went for everything in the college school, and for the dean to be guilty of the heterodoxy of awarding the prize to any except one of the four seniors had not occurred to the boys as being within the range of serious possibility.

The boys took their station in the school, and the dean proceeded to the examination. Two of the canons were with him, and the masters of the school, one of whom was the Rev. Mr. Prattleton; but he attended only twice a week for an especial branch of study. The clergy and boys all wore their surplices, and the dean and prebendaries retained their caps on their heads.

The examination proceeded smoothly enough, for the complaisant dean confined himself chiefly to the classics. He questioned the boys in the books and at the places put into his hands by the masters, and he winked metaphorically at the low promptings administered when the classes came to

a full stop or a stammer. The masters recovered confidence, and were congratulating themselves inwardly at the dreaded event being well over, when, to their unspeakable dismay, the dean disbanded the classes, and, desiring the forty boys to stand indiscriminately before him, began to question them.

This was the real examination: some of the questions were simple, some difficult, embracing various subjects. But, simple or difficult, it was all one, for, taken by surprise, ill-educated, ill-grounded, the boys could not answer. One of them alone proved himself equal to the emergency. You need not be told that it was Henry Arkell. Not at a single question did he hesitate, till at length the dean told him, with a smile, *not* to answer, until the questions had gone the round of the school. Of all branches of education, save their rote of Latin and Greek, the boys were entirely ignorant, though some of the dean's questions were ludicrously simple.

"Can you make the square of a cube?"

Nobody answered, save by a prodigious deal of coughing, and Henry Arkell had once more to be appealed to.

"What is the difference between a right angle and an acute one?"

More coughing, and then a dead silence. The dean happened to be looking hard at one particular boy,

or the boy fancied so, and his ears became as red as the head master's. "If you please, Mr. Dean, our desk is not in algebra."

"Who was Caligula?" continued the dean.

"King of France in the ninth century," was the prompt answer from one who thought he was in luck.

"It was now the dean's turn to cough, as he replaced the question by another: "Can you tell me anything about Charles the Second?"

"He invented black lap-dogs with long ears."

The dean nearly choked.

"And was beheaded," added a timid voice.

"Was he?" retorted the dean. "Can you say anything about Charles the First, and the events of his reign?"

"Yes, sir. He found out the Gunpowder Plot, and was succeeded by Oliver Cromwell."

"Where are the Bahama Isles," asked the dean, in despair.

In the Mediterranean," cried a tall boy.—"And they are very fertile," added another.

The dean paused a hopeless pause. "Can you spell 'Dutch?'"

"D-u-c-h." "D-u-t-s-h." "D-u-s-h-t," escaped from various tongues, drowning other novel phases of the word.

"Spell 'Cane,'" frowned the dean, though he was laughing inwardly.

"K-a-n-e," was the eager reply.

"Perhaps you can spell 'birch,'" roared Dr. Ferraday, an irascible prebendary.

They could: "B-u-r-c-h."

"What was the social condition of the Ancient Britons when their country was invaded by Julius Cæsar?" the dean asked, rubbing his face.

"They always went about naked, and never shaved, and their clothes were made of the skins of beasts."

"This is frightful," interrupted Dr. Ferraday. "The school reflects the greatest discredit upon—somebody," glaring through his spectacles at the purple and scarlet faces of the masters. "There's only one boy who is not a living monument of ignorance. He—what's your name, boy?"

"Arkell, sir."

"True; Arkell," assented Dr. Ferraday. He knew who he was perfectly well, but he was the proudest man of all the canons, and would not condescend to show that he remembered. "Sir, for your age you are a brilliant scholar."

"How is it?" puzzled Mr. Meddler, another of the prebendaries: "has Arkell superior abilities, and have all the rest none? Answer for yourself, Arkell."

The boy hesitated. Both in mind and manners he was so different from the general run of school-

boys; and he could not bear to be thus held out as a sort of pattern for the rest.

"It is not my fault, sir—or theirs. My father has always kept me to my studies so closely out of school hours, and attended to them himself, that I could not help getting on in advance of the school."

"Wilberforce," roughly spoke up Dr. Ferraday, in his overbearing manner, "how is it that this boy is not senior?"

"That post is attained by priority of entrance, sir," replied the master. "Arkell can only become senior boy when those above him leave."

"He ought to be senior now."

"We cannot act against the customs of the school, Dr. Ferraday," repeated the master. "Arkell is at the first desk, but he cannot be senior of the school out of his turn."

"Can you tell me whence England chiefly procures her supplies of cotton?" asked Mr. Meddler, mildly, of a mild-looking boy belonging to the third desk. "You, sir; Van Brummel, I think your name is."

Mr. Van Brummel, considerably taken-to at being addressed individually, lost his head completely. "From the signing of Magna Charta by King John."

"Why, what a stupid owl you must be!" snapped Dr. Ferraday, before Canon Meddler could speak.

Mr. Van Brummel's face turned red; he was a timid boy, and he wondered whether they would order him to be flogged.

"Please, sir, I know that's the answer in the book," he earnestly said: "I learnt them over again this morning."

"It may be an answer to something, but not to my question," said Mr. Meddler, as he stepped apart to confer with his colleagues. "What is to be done, Mr. Dean? This state of things cannot be allowed to go on."

They talked for a few moments together, and then the dean turned to the boys.

"Stand forward, Arkell."

Henry Arkell advanced, a hot flush on his sensitive face; and the Dean threw round his neck a broad blue ribbon, suspending a medal of gold. "I have much pleasure in bestowing this upon you; never was reward more justly merited; and," he concluded, raising his voice high as he swept the room with his eyes, "I feel bound to declare publicly, that Henry Cheveley Arkell is an honour to Westerbury collegiate school."

"As all the rest of you are a disgrace to it," stormed Dr. Ferraday on the discomfited lot behind.

"You must let me have it back again to-morrow morning, that I may get your name inscribed on

it," said the dean to Henry, in a low tone. "Wear it for to-day."

The boys were dismissed. They took off their surplices in the cloisters, not presuming to unrobe in the presence of the cathedral dignitaries, who prolonged their stay in the college hall: "to blow off at Wilberforce and the rest," one of the seniors irreverently surmised aloud. Some swung the surplices across their arms; some crammed them into bags; and an unusual silence pervaded the group. Lewis was bitterly disappointed. He was as good a classical scholar as Arkell, and thought he ought to have had the medal.

Miss Beauclerc was waiting at the deanery door. "Well, boys, and who has got it?" was her salutation before any of them were up.

"A sneaking young beggar," called out Lewis, thinking he might as well make the best of things to her, and answer first.

"Then you have not got it, Lewis; I told you you wouldn't," laughed the young lady; "though I heard that you made certain sure of it, and had ordered a glass case to keep it in."

Lewis nearly boiled over with rage.

"Arkell has gained it, Miss Beauclerc," said the senior boy.

"Of course; I knew he would. I was sure from the first that none of you could contend against

him, provided there was a fair field and no favour."

"No favour!" scornfully echoed Lewis. "A bright eye and a girl's face, these are what we should covet now, to curry favour with the Dean and Chapter."

"Lewis, you forget yourself," reproved Miss Beauclerc; "and I'll inform against you if you talk treason of the dean," she laughingly continued.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Beauclerc," was the sullen apology of Lewis, delivered in a most ungracious tone.

"Arkell's merits alone have gained the prize, Lewis, and you know it," proceeded the young lady; "they must have gained it had he been as ugly as you."

"I am much obliged to you, Miss Beauclerc," foamed Lewis, with as much resentment as he dared show to the dean's daughter.

"Well, you are right about his merits, Miss Beauclerc," interrupted Jocelyn; "no question came amiss to him. By Jove! old Ferraday was not wrong in calling him a brilliant scholar; I had no idea he knew half as much. The dean said he was an honour to the school."

"*That* he has been a long while," she said, quietly. "You boys may sneer—you are sneering now, Aultane, but——"

"No, indeed, Miss Beauclerc," interrupted Aultane, "I would not do such a thing as sneer in your presence. Of course it couldn't be expected that he'd be anything but a good scholar, when his father's a schoolmaster."

"And teaches boys at half-a-crown an hour," put in Lewis junior. "He acknowledged to the dean, it was all through his father's cramming him."

Henry Arkell was coming up; Miss Beauclerc moved forwards and shook him by the hand.

"I congratulate you," she said, in a half whisper. "Why it looks like the ribbon of the Garter. You may win that some time, if you live; who knows? I knew you would get it, if you were only true to yourself; Frederick St. John said so too. Mind you write to-day to tell him."

She had taken the medal in her hand, and was looking at it. The rest pressed round as closely as they dared. Lewis only stood aside, a bitter expression on his ugly lips.

A little fellow ran up, all in a fright. "Oh! if you please, if you please, Miss Beauclerc, here comes the dean."

"What if he does?" retorted Miss Beauclerc; "he won't eat you. There, you may go, boys. Henry Arkell, you know you are expected at the deanery to-night."

"Yes, thank you, Miss Beauclerc," he replied, some hesitation, or surprise, visible in his tone.

"Ah, but I mean to *us*, after the dinner. Mamma has what she calls one of her quiet soirées. You'll be sure to come."

One glance from his brilliant eyes, beneath which her blue ones fell, and he drew away. The rest were already off. Georgina walked forward to meet the dean, and she put her arm within his in her loving manner.

"Oh, papa, the boys are so envious of the medal. I stopped them and made them show it me. That ugly Lewis is ready to cut his throat."

"Random-spoken as usual, my darling. Who's throat?"

"Henry Arkell's of course, papa. But I knew no one else would gain it. They are not fit to tie his shoes."

"In learning, they certainly are not. You can't imagine what a ludicrous display we have had! And some of them go soon to the university!"

"It's not the fault of the boys, papa. If they are never taught anything but Greek and Latin, how can they be expected to know anything else?"

"Very true, Georgie," mused Dr. Beauclerc. "Some of these old systems are stupid things."

The audit dinner in the evening went off as those dinners generally did. The boys dined at a

table by themselves, and Henry, as their senior, had to exert firm authority over some, for the supply of wine was unlimited. Later in the evening, he passed through the gallery to the drawing-room, as invited by Miss Beauclerc. A few ladies were assembled: the canon's wives and daughters, Mrs. Wilberforce, and two or three other inhabitants of the Grounds; all very quiet, and what in these later days might have been called "slow:" Mrs. Beauclerc's parties mostly were so. They were talking of Frederick St. John when Henry went in, who was again absent from Westerbury, visiting somewhere with his mother and Lady Anne.

Henry wore his medal; the broad blue ribbon conspicuous. Some time was taken up examining that, and then he was asked to sing. It was a treat to hear him; and his voice as yet gave forth no token of losing its power and sweetness, though he was close upon sixteen.

He sang song after song—for they pressed for it—accompanying himself. One song that he was especially asked for, he could not remember without the music. Mrs. Wilberforce suggested that he should fetch it from home, but Georgina said she could play it for him, and sat down. It was that fine song called "The Treasures of the Deep," by Mrs. Hemans. It was found, however, that she could not play it; and after two or three attempts,

she began a waltz instead; and the ladies, in the distance round the fire, forgot at length that they had wanted it.

Georgina wore an evening dress of white spotted muslin, a broad blue sash round her waist, and a bit of narrow blue velvet suspending a cross on her neck. She had taken off her bracelets to play, and her pretty white arms were bare. Her eyes were blue as the ribbon, and altogether she looked very attractive, very *young*, and she was that night in one of her wild and inexplicable humours.

What she really said, how he responded, will never be wholly known: certain it is, that she led him on, on, until he resigned himself wholly to the fascination and "told his love;" although he might have known that to do so was little less than madness. She affected to ridicule him; she intimated that her love was not for a college boy; but all the while her looks gave the lie to her words; her blue eyes spoke of admiration still; her flushed face of triumphant, gratified vanity. *They* were engaged round the fire, round the tables, anywhere; and Georgina had it all to herself, and played bars of music now and then, as if she were essaying different pieces.

"Let us put aside this nonsense," she suddenly said. "It *is* nonsense, and you know it, Harry.

Here's a song," snatching the first that came to hand—" sing this ; I'll play it for you."

" Do you think I can *sing?*—now ? with your cold words blighting me. Oh, tell me the worst!" he added, his tone one of strange pain. " Tell me——"

" Goodness, Henry Arkell ! If you look and talk in that serious manner, I shall think you have become crazy. Come ; begin."

" I seem to be in a sort of dream," he murmured, putting his hands to his temples. " Surely all the past, all our pleasant intercourse, is not to be forgotten ! You will not throw me away like this ?"

" Where's the use of my playing this symphony, if you don't begin ?"

" Georgina !—let me call you so for the first, perhaps for the last time—dear Georgina, you cannot forget the past ! You cannot mean what you have just said."

" How unpleasant you are making things to-night !" she said, with a laugh. " I shall begin to think you have followed the example of those wretched little juniors, and taken plentifully of wine."

" Perhaps I have ; perhaps it is owing to that that I have courage freely to talk to you now. Georgina, you *know* how I have loved you ; you know that for years and years my life has been as one long blissful dream, filled with the image of you."

She stole a glance at him from her blue eyes; a smile hovered on her parted lips. He bent his head until his brown wavy curls mingled with her lighter hair.

"Georgina, you know—you know that you can be life or death to me."

He could not speak with consecutive smoothness; his heart was beating as if it would burst its bounds, his whole frame thrilled, his fingers were trembling.

"Tell me that it is not all to be forgotten!"

"Indeed, if you have been cultivating a wrong impression—I can only advise you to forget it. I have liked you;" her voice sank to the lowest whisper—"very much; I have been so stupid as to let you see it; but I never meant you to—to—presume upon it in this uncomfortable manner."

"One question!" he urged. "Only one. Is it that you have played with me, loving another?"

Her right hand was on the keys of the piano, striking chords continually; a false note grating now and then on the ear. Her left hand lay passive on her lap, as she sat, slightly turned to him.

"Stuff and nonsense! No, I have not. You will have them overhear you, Harry."

"Do not equivocate—dearest Georgina—let me hear the truth. It may be better for me; I can bear anything rather than deceit. Let me know

the truth; I beseech it of you by all the hours we have passed together."

"Harry, you are decidedly beside yourself to-night. Don't suffer the world behind to get a notion of it."

"You are playing with me now," he said, quite a wail in his low voice. "Let me, one way or the other, be at rest. I never shall bear this suspense, and live. Give me an answer, Georgina; one that shall abide for ever."

"An answer to what?"

"Have you all this while loved another?"

She took her hand off the keys, and began picking out the treble notes of a song with her forefinger, bending her head slightly.

"The answer might not be palatable."

"No, it may not. Nevertheless, I pray you give it me. You are killing me, Georgina."

She looked up hastily; she saw that the bright, transparent complexion of the face had turned to a deadly whiteness: and, perhaps, in that one moment, Georgina Beauclerc's heart smote her with a slight reproach of cruelty. But she may have deemed it well to put an end to the suspense, and she bent her head again as she spoke.

"Even though I had loved another, what of that? I don't admit that I have; and I say that it is a question you have no right to ask me.

Harry! be reasonable; though I had loved *you*, it could not come to anything; you know it could not; so what does it signify?"

"But you have *not* loved me?"

"Well—no. Not in that way. Here's the dean coming in; and here's pompous old Ferraday. You must sing a song; papa's sure to ask for one."

She hastened from the piano, as if glad to escape. The dean did ask for a song. But when they came to look for him who was to sing it, he was nowhere to be seen.

"Bless me!" cried the dean, "I thought Henry Arkell was here. Where is he?"

"I dare say he has gone home for the 'Treasures of the Deep,' papa," readily replied Georgina. "Somebody asked him to fetch it just now."

He had not gone for the "Treasures of the Deep;" and, as she guessed pretty accurately, he had no intention of returning. He was walking slowly towards the master's house, his temporary home; his head was aching, his brain was burning, and he felt as if all life had gone out of him for ever. That she had been befooling him; that she loved Frederick St. John with an impassioned lasting love, appeared to him as clear as the stars in a frosty sky.

But there were no stars then, and no frost; the fineness of the night had gone, and a drizzling rain was falling. He did not heed it; it might

wet him if it would, might soak even that gay blue badge on his breast. Two people within view seemed to heed it as little ; they were pacing together, arm-in-arm, in a dark part of the grounds, talking in an undertone. So absorbed were they, that both started when Henry came up ; they were near a gaslight then, and he recognised George Prattleton. The other face, on which the light shone brightly, he did not know.

"How d'ye do?" said Henry. "Do you know whether Prattleton junior has got home yet?" Prattleton junior, the younger of the Reverend Mr. Prattleton's sons, was in the choir under Henry; and the senior chorister had had some trouble with that gentleman at the dinner-table on this, the audit-night.

"I don't know anything about Prattleton junior," returned George Prattleton in a testy tone, as if the question itself, or the being spoken to, had annoyed him.

Henry walked on, and round the corner came upon the gentleman in question, Prattleton junior, with another of the choristers, Mr. Wilberforce's son Edwin, each having taken as much as was good for him, both to eat and to drink.

"Who's that with George?" asked Henry—for it was somewhat unusual to see a stranger in the grounds at night.

"Oh, it's a Mr. Rolls," replied young Prattleton: "I heard my brother ask George. He meets him in the billiard rooms."

"Well, you be off home, now; you'll get wet. Wilberforce, I'm going in. You can come with me."

Young Mr. Prattleton appeared disposed to resist the mandate. He liked being in the rain, he persisted. But the arrival of his father at that moment from the deanery settled the matter.

And Henry Arkell, having happened to look back, saw George Prattleton draw the stranger into the shade, and remain in ambush while the minor canon passed.

CHAPTER XV.

A NIGHT WITH THE GHOSTS.

THE succeeding day to this was fine again, a charming day for the middle of November; and when the college school rushed down the steps at four o'clock, the upper boys were tempted to commence one of their noisy games. Nearly the only two who declined were the senior boy and Arkell. The senior of the school, whoever he might be for the time being, rarely, if ever, played, and the present one, Jocelyn, was also too idle. Both went quietly on to the master's, walking arm-in-arm. The school closed at four in the dead of winter. Henry came out again immediately, his music in his hand, and was running past the boys.

"I say, Arkell, we are going to cast lots for the stag. Where are you bolting to?"

"I can't join this evening—I'm off to practise. To-morrow is my lesson day, and I have not touched the organ this week."

"Cram! What's the good? It'll be night

directly, and that mouldy old organ loft as dark as pitch."

"Oh, I shall see for ever so long to come—the sun has not set yet," returned Henry, without stopping. "Thank you, Lewis," he added, as a sharp stone struck his trencher. "That was from you, I saw. I shall not pay you back in kind."

There was a sting in the retort, from the very manner of giving it, so pointedly gentleman-like, for Henry Arkell had stopped a moment, and raised his trencher, as he might have done to the dean. Lewis saw that the boys were laughing at him, and he suddenly set upon seven juniors, and made the whole lot cry.

Active and swift, Henry soon gained the precincts of the church, St. James the Less. He pushed open the outer door of the clerk's house, and took the key of the church from its niche in the passage, close to the kitchen door. This he also opened, and looked in. It was a square room, the floor of red brick, and a bed, with a curtain drawn before it, was on one side against the wall. The old man, Hunt, sat smoking in the chimney corner.

"I am going in to play, Hunt. I have the key."

"Very well, sir."

"How's the missis?" he stopped to ask.

"She be bad in all her bones, sir, she be. I telled her to lie down for half an hour: it's that nasty ague she have got upon her again. This be a damp spot to live in, so many low trees about," he continued, with a shrug of his shoulders.

Henry could not remember when the "missis" was not "bad in all her bones;" her ague seemed to be chronic. He proceeded on his way, passed the iron gates, walked up the churchyard, and unlocked the church door. Once in, he took the key from the outer lock, and placing it upon the bench inside, pushed the door to, but did not shut it. The taking out the key in this manner was by Mr. Wilberforce's orders: if they left it in the lock outside, some mischievous person might come and remove it, he had told the boys. Then he ascended to the organ-loft and commenced his practising. No blower was required, as certain pedals, touched with the feet, acted instead, something after the manner of a modern harmonium. His heart was in his task, in spite of the heavy care at it, for he loved music; and when it grew too dusk to see, he continued playing from memory.

The shades of evening were gathering outside, as well as in; and under cover of them a boy might have been seen tealing through the churchyard. It was Henry's rival, Lewis, whose mind had just

been hatching a nice little revengeful plot. To say that Lewis had been half mad since the preceding day, would not be saying too much: he could have borne anything better than taunts from Miss Beauclerc; and for those taunts he would be revenged, the fates permitting, upon Henry Arkell. He did not quite see how, yet; but, as a little prologue, he intended to lock him in the church for the night, the idea of *that* having flashed into his mind after Henry had thanked him for throwing the stone.

Lewis gently pulled open the church door, looked for the key, saw it, and snatched it, locked the church door upon the unconscious boy, who was playing, and stole back again, key in hand. Beyond the gates of the churchyard he stopped to laugh, as though he had accomplished a great feat.

"Won't his crowing be cooled by morning! He'll be seeing ghosts all night, and calling out blue murder; but nobody can hear him, and there he must stop with them. What a jolly sell!"

He hid the key in his jacket pocket until he reached old Hunt's house. Lewis knew it was kept there, but did not know there was a niche or a nail for it in the passage. He did not care to be seen, and therefore must get the key in, in the best way he could.

The clerk and his ailing wife were sitting by their fire now, taking tea. A china saucer, containing some milk, had just been put down on the brick floor for the cat, a snarling, enormous yellow animal, but a particularly-cherished one by both master and mistress. The cat had got her nose in it, and the old woman was lovingly regarding her, when the door opened about an inch, and the church key came flying in, propelled on to the cat's head and the saucer. The cat started away with a howl, the saucer flew in pieces, and the milk was scattered. In the midst of this the door closed again, and footsteps were heard scampering off.

"Mercy on us!" shrieked the old dame, startled out of her seven senses. "What be that?"

The clerk, recovering his consternation, rose and regarded the damage; the broken saucer, the wasted milk, and the scared cat—the genial animal standing with her back up in the farthest corner.

"That's the way they do it, is it?" he wrathfully cried, as he stooped to pick up the key, a difficult process, from his rheumatic loins. "My gentleman can't bring in the key and hang it up decently, but must shy it in, and do this mischief! I wonder the master lets 'em have the run of the organ! I wouldn't."

"It were that Robbins, I know," said the dame, shaking still.

"It were just the t'other, then—Arkell. Poor pussy! poor tit, tit, tit!"

"Arkell! Why he be always so quiet and perlite!"

"It's a perlite thing to fling the key in upon us after this fashion, ain't it?" growled the clerk.

"Come along then, titsey! Don't put its back up! Come to its missis!"

But the outraged cat wholly refused to be soothed. It snarled, and spit, and snarled again; making a spring finally into a pantry, and thence away through an open casement window.

The tea hour at the head master's was half-past five; and the boys sat down to it this evening as usual. They were accustomed to take that meal alone, and the absence of one or other of the boys at it had become, in consequence, rather general; therefore, Arkell's not appearing went really without notice. Lewis appeared to be in a flow of delight, and devoured Arkell's share of bread-and-butter as well as his own. There were in all, at this time, about ten boarders residing at the master's, some of them being his private pupils. The two Lewises were there still; but Mrs. Lewis had given notice of their removal at Christmas, as she intended to receive them into the house she had taken possession of—the late Marmaduke Carr's.

Now it happened, by good or by ill luck, as the

reader may decide, that the master and Mrs. Wilberforce were abroad that evening. In his absence the senior boy had full authority, and the rest dared not disobey him. This might not have been well with some seniors; but Jocelyn was one in whom confidence could be placed. At supper—eight o'clock—Arkell was still absent, and Jocelyn now observed it. One of the others remarked that he was most likely at the deanery. This was Vaughan; a rather stupid boy, who had been nicknamed in consequence Bright Vaughan.

At nine o'clock, the man-servant brought in the book for prayers, read by the senior boy when the master himself was not there. Absence from prayers was never excused, unless under the especial permission of Mr. Wilberforce; and he would have severely punished any boy guilty of it. Another thing that he exacted was, that prayers should be read precisely to the hour. So Jocelyn read them, and the servant carried away the book.

"I say, though, where can Arkell be?" wondered the boys. "He's never out like this, unless he has leave."

"Perhaps he means to make a night of it?" suggested Lewis junior, opportunely enough, if he had but known it.

"Hold your tongue, Lewis junior," said Jocelyn.

"He may have got leave from the master for the evening, and we not know it."

"I don't think he has, though," dissented young Wilberforce.

"We won't split upon him," eagerly spoke up Lewis—not the junior. "He has been a horrid sneak, especially in getting himself in with the dean's daughter; but it won't do to begin splitting one upon another."

"I should like to hear any of you attempting it," authoritatively spoke the senior boy. "I'd split you."

"We don't mean to. Don't be so sharp, Jocelyn."

"There's not the least doubt that he is at the deanery," decided Jocelyn. "I heard something said the other day about the master's having given him general leave to stop there, when asked, without coming home to say it."

"Who told you that, Jocelyn?" questioned Lewis, his ears turning red.

"I heard it, and that's enough. The master can depend upon Arkell, you know."

"Oh, can he though!" cried Lewis, ironically. "I'd lay a crown he's not at the deanery."

"Up to bed, boys," commanded Jocelyn.

The Lewises, senior and junior, and Henry Arkell slept in one room; the rest of the boys were

divided into two others. The rooms in the quaint old house were not large. All had separate beds. Arkell's was in the corner behind the door. Marmaduke Lewis, the younger, was in bed immediately, schoolboy fashion, the process occupying about half-a-minute; but the elder did not seem inclined to be so quick to-night. He dawdled about the room, brushed his hair, held his mouth open to admire his teeth in the glass, tried how many different faces he could make, stuck pins in the candle, and, in short, seemed in anything but a bed humour. In the midst of this delay, he heard the voice of Mr. Wilberforce, speaking to one of the servants, as he ascended the stairs.

What Lewis did, in his consternation, he hardly knew. The first thing was to turn the candle upside down in the candlestick, and jam it well in; the next was to fling some of his brother's clothes on to his own chair; and the third to bolt into bed with his own clothes on, and draw the counterpane over his head. Mr. Wilberforce opened the door.

"Are you in bed, boys?"

Lewis put part of his face out.

"Yes, sir. Good night, sir."

"Good night," repeated Mr. Wilberforce, and closed the door upon the room.

Lewis breathed a blessing upon all propitious stars, that he had not looked behind the door at

the vacant bed. Then his going to let out Arkell was impossible, now Mr. Wilberforce was in: which had been the indecisive project agitating his brain.

And now we must return to Henry Arkell. The church of St. James the Less struck a quarter past five when Henry took his fingers from the keys of the organ. "Only a quarter past five," he soliloquized; "how the evenings draw in! Last week was moonlight, and I did not notice it so much. I don't see how I shall get my practising here these winter months, unless I snatch an hour between morning and afternoon school."

He felt for his music, for it was too dark to see, rolled it up, and then felt his way down the narrow and nearly perpendicular staircase, dark even in daylight. When he reached the bench at the entrance, he placed his hand on the spot where he had put the key. He could not feel it: he only supposed he had missed the spot by an inch or two, and groped about with his hands. He turned to the door to pull it open, and let in the light.

The door was closed, was fast; and Henry Arkell felt his face grow hot as the truth burst upon him, that he was fastened up in the church. He concluded that the old clerk had done it in mistake. "I must ring the bell," thought he, "and let them know somebody's in the church."

But he was doomed to fresh disappointment,

for, on groping his way to the belfry, he found it fastened: cords, bells, and all were locked up. Sometimes this door was locked, sometimes it was left open, just as the clerk remembered, or not, to fasten it.

"I can't stop here all night!" exclaimed he, his face growing more and more heated. "What in the world am I to do?"

What indeed? What would you have done, reader? Set on and shouted? But there was nobody to hear: the church was solitary, and its walls were thick. Thump at the door? But if you had nothing but your hands to thump with, little hope that any result would be obtained.

It was a novel and a disagreeable situation for the boy to be placed in—locked alone in the gloomy old church; gloomy in more than one sense of the word, and smelling of the dead. The small, confined windows were high up in the walls, and entirely inaccessible, and there was no other outlet. The vestry was only lighted by two panes of thick glass inserted into its roof; and, in short, the case was hopeless.

And the boy grew so. He shouted, and called, and thumped, just as you or I might have done, without any regard to its manifest inutility. He was a brave-spirited boy, owning a clear conscience; and he was a singularly religious boy, far more so

than it is usual for those of his age to be, possessing an ever-present trust in God's good care and protection. Still, disagreeable thoughts would intrude: his lonely situation stood out in exaggerated force, and recollections of a certain ghostly tale, connected with that church, rose up before him. It was a tale which had gone the round of Westerbury the previous year, and the ghostly-inclined put firm faith in it. The old clerk was an obstinate believer in it, for he had seen it with his own eyes; the sexton had seen it with his, and two gravediggers had seen it with theirs. A citizen had died, and been buried in the middle aisle, not many yards from where Henry Arkell now stood. After his burial, suspicion arose that he had not come fairly to his end, and the coroner had issued his mandate for the disinterment of the body, and the sexton and two gravediggers proceeded to their task. They chose night to do it in, "not to be bothered with starers at 'em," they said; and the clerk chose to bear them company. At three o'clock in the morning the whole four rushed out of the church panic-stricken, made their way to the nearest street, and rose it with their frantic cries. Windows were thrown up in alarm, and nightcaps stretched out—what on earth was the matter? The buried man's ghost had appeared to them in a sea of blue flame, was the trembling tale they told,

and which went forth to Westerbury. The blue flame was accounted for; the ghost, never. They had a basin full of gin with them, and, in lighting a pipe, they had managed to set light to the gin, which immediately ascended in a ghastly stream. The men, it was found, had a little gin on board themselves, as well as in the basin; and to that, no doubt, in conjunction with the blue flames, the ghost owed its origin.

Now a ghost in broad daylight, with all the bustle and reality of midday life about us, and a ghost fastened up with oneself in a church at night-time, bear two widely different aspects. Henry Arkell had heartily laughed at the story, had made merry over the consternation of the half-drunken men, but he did not altogether enjoy being so near the ghostly spot now; for though reason tried to be heard, imagination had got fast hold of the reins. He lifted his eyes, with a desperate effort, and looked round the church: he began to calculate which was the very spot, in the gloom of the middle aisle: he grasped the door of a pew near where he stood, and bent his face down upon it in an agony of terror.

"And I must be here until morning," his conviction whispered. "O God! keep this terror from me! Send thine Holy Spirit to come near and strengthen me! Oh, yes, yes," he resumed, after

a pause; "I shall be all right if I do but trust in God. He is everywhere; He is with me now. I will go up to the organ again."

He groped his way up, sat down, and began to play as well as he could in the perfect darkness. He played some of the cathedral chants, and sang to them; it was a curious sound, echoing there in the dark and lonely night; and it was a positive fact that, in so doing, his superstitious alarm passed from his mind.

But oh, how long the hours were! how long the quarters, as the slow clock gave them out! He still kept on playing, dreading to leave off lest the terror should come back again. When it struck nine, he could have thought it four in the morning, judging by the dreary time that seemed to have elapsed. "The boys will be going up to bed directly," he said, thinking of the master's; "oh, why don't they send out to look for me? But they'd never think of looking here!"

He kept on playing. About ten o'clock he knelt down to say his prayers, as if preparing to retire for the night, and then ensconced himself as comfortably as he could on the seat of the singers, which was well cushioned. "If I could but go to sleep, and sleep till daylight," thought he, "there would be no chance of that foolish terror coming back again. Foolish indeed! How very absurd I am!"

He fell into a train of thought; not happy thought: schoolboys have trouble as well as grown people: and Henry Arkell had plenty just then, as you know. The superstitious feeling did not come back, and at length he sank into sleep.

He did not know what roused him: something did. The first thing he heard distinctly was a scuffling noise, followed by a "hush-sh-sh!" breathed from a human voice. He felt a cramped sensation all over, but that arose from his inconvenient couch, and he could not for the life of him remember where he was.

He stretched out his hand, and it came in contact with the front of the gallery; it was close to him, for the singers' seat was very narrow: he raised himself to look over, still not remembering what had passed. He seemed to be in a church, for one of two male figures, walking up the aisle, carried a lighted taper, which threw its glimmering upon the pews, though the man shaded it with his hand. Whether Henry Arkell had been dreaming of robbers, certain it is, he judged these men to be such: they turned off to the vestry, which was on the side of the church, nearly at the top; and he rubbed his eyes, and full recollection returned to him.

"What has put robbers in my head?" he debated. "They are not robbers: they must be come to

look for me. But they stole up as if they were robbers!" he added after a pause. "And why did they not call out to me?"

An impulse took him down from the gallery and up the church; he moved as silently as the men had done. The vestry door was open, and he stood outside on the matting and peeped in, secure of not being seen in the darkness. To his surprise, he recognised faces he knew—gentlemen's faces, not robbers'. One of them was George Prattleton; and the other was the stranger he had seen with him the previous night. What were they doing in the vestry at that hour?

"Now make haste about it, Rolls," George Prattleton was saying, as Henry gazed in. "I don't half like the work, and if I had not been more hard up than any poor devil ever was yet, you would never have got me on to it. There's the register."

George Prattleton had unlocked a safe and taken a book from it, which he put on the table. "Mind, Rolls, you are not to copy anything; that was the agreement."

"I don't want to copy anything: I gave you my word, didn't I?" was the reply of Mr. Rolls, who had seized upon the book. "I only want to see whether a certain entry is here, or whether it is not, and I give you 20*l.* for getting me the sight: and a deuced easy wayit is of earning 20*l.*, Prattleton."

Rolls had drawn a chair to the table, and was poring over the register, as he spoke, turning the leaves one by one. Prattleton stood by, and held the candle, not very steadily.

"I can't see, if you whiffle it like that, Prat," cried Mr. Rolls, taking the candlestick from his hand and setting it on the table.

"How long shall you be?"

"Why, I have hardly begun. Don't be impatient. Sit down on that other chair and take a nap, if you are tired."

Prattleton continued to stand at the table, but his impatience was evidently great. His back was to Henry Arkell, but the boy had full view of the countenance and movements of the other: his interest, in what was passing, was not less than his astonishment.

"You say you know the date, so where's the use of being so dilatory?" cried Mr. Prattleton. "You turn over the leaves as slow as if you were going to execution. Ah, you have it now, I think."

"No, I have not." And Rolls turned another leaf over as he spoke, and went on studying; but he stealthily placed his thumb to mark the page he left. Prattleton yawned, whistled, and yawned again, and finally turned away and began to look in the safe; anything to cover his impatience. Upon which, Henry Arkell distinctly saw Rolls

turn back to the page where his thumb was, examine it intently, and then silently blow out the light.

"Halloa!" roared Prattleton, finding himself in darkness.

"What a beast of a candle!" indignantly uttered Mr. Rolls. "It's gone out!"

"What put it out?"

"How can I tell? The damp, I suppose: everything smells mouldy. Give us the matches, Prat."

"I have not got the matches. You took them.'

"Did I? Then I'm blest if I have not left them on the bench at the door. Go for them, Prat, will you: if I lose my place in the book I shall have to begin all over again, and that will keep us longer than you'd like."

Mr. Prattleton—with a few expletives not often heard in churches—felt his way through the vestry door. Henry had not time to retreat, so he drew himself closely up against the wall, and Prattleton passed him. But, to Henry Arkell's surprise, a light almost immediately reappeared inside the vestry. He naturally looked in again.

Rolls had relighted the candle, and was inserting what looked like a thin board, behind one of the leaves of the register: he then drew a sharp penknife down it, close to the binding, and out came the leaf, leaving no trace. He folded the leaf, put

it in his pocket with the board and the knife, and then blew out the light again. All was accomplished with speed, but with perfect coolness. "Nothing risk, nothing win," cried he, audibly: "I thought I could do him."

Prattleton soon came up the church with the box of matches, igniting some as he walked, by way of lighting his steps. Henry drew away against the wall, and crouched down beneath a dark mahogany pew.

"There go the three-quarters past one, Rolls; we have been in here five-and-twenty minutes. Don't let the light go out again."

"I shall soon have done. I am getting near the place where the entry ought to be—if it is in at all; but I told you there was a doubt. So much the better for us if it's not."

Prattleton sat down and drummed on the table. Rolls came to the end of the register.

"It's not in, Prattleton. Hurrah! It will be thousands of pounds in our pocket. When the other side brought forth the lame tale that there was such a thing, we thought it was a bag of moonshine. Here's your register. Put it up."

Henry stole silently towards the church door, hoping to get out: he dared not show himself to those two swindlers. He was fortunate: though the door was locked, the key was in, and he passed

out, leaving it open. What he was to do with himself till morning, he knew not: he might sit down on the gravestones; but he had had enough of graves; he supposed he must pace the town.

The gentlemen set things straight in the vestry, and also came, in due course, to the door. They had left it locked, and now it was open! Each looked at the other in amazement.

"What possessed you to do that?" demanded Rolls, in a fiercer tone than was consistent with politeness.

"I do it! that's good," retorted Prattleton. "It was you locked it, or pretended to."

"I did lock it. You must have opened it when you came down for the matches."

"I wish we may be dropped upon if I did! I should be an idiot to open the door and give night-birds a chance of scenting what we were up to."

"Psha!" impatiently uttered Rolls, "a locked door could not open of itself. But there's no harm done; so blow out the light, and let's get off."

Thus disputing—for in truth the open door had struck something like terror on the heart of both—George Prattleton and his friend quitted the church, leaving all secure. Mr. George had to carry the key home with him; he could not fling it into the clerk's house, as Lewis had done, for

the house was fastened up; most houses are at two in the morning. He had successfully executed a little *ruse* to get the key, unsuspected by the clerk: watching his opportunity, he had arrived at the clerk's house when that official had gone out for his supper-beer, ostensibly to put a question in regard to the time that a funeral was to take place on the morrow; and while talking to the old dame, he managed to abstract the key, hanging one that outwardly resembled it in its place. The Reverend Mr. Prattleton often took the duty at St. James-the-Less for the head master; and George was tolerably familiar with its ways and places.

They went along with stealthy steps, their eyes peering fitfully into dark corners, lest any should be abroad and see them. Once in the more frequented streets it did not so much matter; they might be going home from some late entertainment, as Mr. George and his latch-key were not infrequently in the habit of doing. Rolls was in a glow of delight; and even an odd fear of detection now and then could not check it.

"I was as sure there was no entry there as sure can be. Our side was sure of it also; only it was well to look and see. I'm more glad than if anybody had put a hundred pounds in my hand."

"Who *is* your side?" asked George Prattleton.

"You have not told me anything, you know, Rolls."

"Well, it would not be very interesting to you. It's an old dispute about a tithe cause; the name's Whiffam."

Not a very lucid explanation; but George Prattleton was tired and cross, and not really over-curious. At the corner of a street he and Rolls parted, and Mr. George went home and let himself in with his latch-key, deeming nobody the wiser for the night's exploit.

CHAPTER XVI.

PERPLEXITY.

Henry Arkell had ample leisure that night for reflection. He got into a newly-built house, whose doors were not yet in, glad of even that shelter. The precise object of what he had seen he did not presume to guess; but, that some bad deed had been transacted, there could be no doubt. And what ought to be his course in it?—it was *that* that was puzzling him. He could not go to Mr. Wilberforce, the incumbent of the church, and denounce George Prattleton—as he would have done had this stranger, Rolls, been the sole offender. Of all the people in Westerbury, that it should have been George Prattleton!—the brother of that kind man from whom his family had received so many obligations. Gratitude towards Mr. Prattleton seemed to demand his silence as to George; and Henry Arkell had an almost ultra sense of the sin of ingratitude.

There was no one of whom he could take counsel; his father was still absent, and he did not like to betray what he had seen to others. Once, the thought crossed him to ask Travice Arkell; but he knew how vexed George Prattleton would be; and he came to the final resolution of speaking to George himself. The mystery of locking him in seemed to be clear now. He supposed George had done it to get possession of the key, not knowing he was in the church.

With the first glimmering dawn of morning—not very early, you know, in November—Henry was hovering about the precincts of the clerk's house. He had no particular business there; but he was restless, and thought he might, by good luck, see or find out something, and he could not hope yet to get in at the master's. Hunt came out to fasten back his shutters.

"What's it you, sir?" exclaimed the old man, in surprise. "You be abroad betimes."

"Ay. How's the rheumatism?"

"Be you going to pay for that chaney saucer you broke?" asked Hunt, allowing the rheumatism to drop into abeyance.

"What saucer?"

"Why that chaney saucer. It was on the floor with the cat's milk, when you flung the key in last night and broke it. The missis is as vexed as can

be—she have had it for years; and if it were cracked a bit, it did for our cat."

"I never broke it," returned Henry. "At least," he added, recollecting himself, and afraid of making some admission that might excite inquiries, "I did not know that I did."

"No, you weren't perlite enough to stop and see what damage you'd done; you made off as fast as your legs would take you. Here's the pieces on the dresser," added the clerk; "you can come and look at the smash you've made. The missis began a talking of getting 'em jined. 'Jine seven pieces,' says I; 'it would cost more nor a new one of the best chaney; and run out then.'"

He hobbled indoors as fast as he could for his lameness, and Henry followed him. The church-key hung on its nail in the niche. Henry stared at it with open eyes; he did not expect to see it there. Had George Prattleton returned it to the clerk in the middle of the night? and was the old man an accomplice? But, as he gazed, his keen eye detected something not familiar in its aspect, and he raised his hand and turned the wards into the light. It was *not* the church key, though it closely resembled it.

He went into the kitchen: the old man was putting the broken pieces in a row. "There they be, sir; you can count 'em for yourself; and they

ought to be replaced with a new one. A common delf would be better than none, for we be short of saucers, and the missis don't like a animal to drink out of the same as us Christians."

"You shall have a saucer," said Henry, somewhat dreamily. "Who threw in the key?"

"Who threw it in?" echoed the clerk.

"I meant to ask what time it was thrown in."

"Why, about five, or a little after: we was at tea. Didn't you know what time it was, yourself, with the clock going the quarters and the halves in your ears while you was at the organ? The missis—— Who's that!"

The "who's that!" referred to a thumping at the house door, which Henry Arkell had closed when he came in. The clerk went and opened it. It was Lewis. Henry recognised his voice, and drew back out of sight.

Now, however uncomfortably Henry Arkell had passed the night, the author of his misfortune had passed it more so. Conscience, especially at the midnight hours, does indeed make cowards of us all, and it had made a miserable one of the senior Lewis. Not that he repented of what he had done, for the ill in itself, or from a better feeling towards his schoolfellow; but he feared the consequences. Suppose Henry Arkell, locked up with the dead, should die of fright, or turn mad? Lewis remem-

bered to have heard of such things. Suppose he should, by a superhuman effort, reach one of the high and narrow windows, and, impelled by terror, propel himself through it and be killed ? Why he, Lewis, would be hung ; or, at the very least, transported for life. These flights of imagination, conveniently suppressing themselves during the evening, worked him into a state of indescribable dread and agitation, when alone at night. How he lay through it he could not tell, and as soon as the master's servants were astir, he got up and sneaked out of the house, with the intention of looking after Arkell, and what the night might have brought forth for him, administering first of all a preliminary beating to his brother as an instalment of what he would get, if he opened his mouth to tell of Arkell's absence.

Why, what do you want ?" uttered the clerk, when he saw Lewis. " We shall have the whole rookery of you college gents here presently."

Lewis paid no attention to what the words might imply; indeed, it may be questioned if he heard them, so great was his state of suspense and agitation. " Old fellow," said he, " I want the key of the church. Do lend it me: I'll bring it back to you directly."

" The key of the church !" returned the clerk ; " you'll come and ask me for my house next. No,

no, young master; I have not got the rector's orders to trust it to any but the two what practises. What do you want in the church?"

"Only to look after something that's left there. It's all right. I won't keep it five minutes."

"No, that you won't, sir, for you won't get it. If the master says you may have it, well and good; but you must get his orders first."

Lewis was desperate. He saw the key hanging in its place, rushed forward, took it from the hook, and made off with it in defiance.

"I won't have this," uttered the discomfited old man. "One a breaking our cat's saucer, and t'other a thieving off the key in my very face! I'll complain to Mr. Wilberforce. Sir, what do that senior Lewis want in the church? He looked as resolute as a lion, and his breath was a panting. What's he after?"

"It is beyond my comprehension," replied Henry, who was preparing to depart, more mystified than before. "If Lewis can get out, I can get in," he thought to himself, "and by dint of some great good luck, they may not have missed me."

Calling out a good morning to Hunt, he hastened away in the direction of the master's, wondering much what Lewis wanted in the church, but not believing it could have reference to his own incarceration.

The next actor on the scene was George Prattleton. He softly entered the clerk's passage, and stretched his hand up to the niche. But there he halted as if dumbfounded, and a key which he held he dropped back into his pocket again.

"What the mischief has been at work now?" muttered he. "How can the old man's eyes have been so quick? I must face the matter boldly, and persuade him his eyes are wrong. Hunt," cried he, aloud, pushing open the kitchen door, "where's the key of the church?"

"Where indeed, sir!" grumbled Hunt. "One of them senior college rebels have just been in and clawed it. But I promise him he won't do it twice: Mr. Wilberforce shall know the tricks they play me, now I'm old. Did you want it, sir?"

"No," returned George Prattleton, carelessly. "I saw it was not on its nail, that's all. I came to know the hour fixed for the funeral. Mr. Prattleton desired me to ascertain, and I looked in last evening, but you were out."

"The missis told me you had been, sir, but I had only just stepped out for our supper beer. Three o'clock to-day is the hour, sir: I thought the missis told you."

At this juncture, in came Lewis, very pale. "Hunt, this is not the key; it won't undo it; and——"

Lewis stopped in consternation, for his eyes had fallen on Mr. George Prattleton. The latter took the key from his unresisting hand.

"If Hunt is to let you college boys have the key at will, and you get tampering with the lock, no wonder it will not undo it. I had better keep it for him," he added, slipping it into his own pocket. "What did you want with the key, Lewis?"

Lewis did not answer.

"Here, Hunt, I'll give you up possession," continued Mr. Prattleton, putting the key on the hook; "but you know if any damage is done to the church, through your allowing indiscriminate entrance to these college gentlemen, you will be held responsible."

"*I* allow 'em!" returned the indignant clerk. "But Mr. Wilberforce shall settle it."

"That's not the church key," said Lewis, staring at the one just hung up.

Mr. Prattleton heard the assertion with equanimity, and began whistling a popular air as he left the house. Hunt just glanced upwards, and saw it was the veritable church key. "It is the key," he said. "What do you mean?"

"It must have been my shaking hand then," debated Lewis. "Old Hunt must know the key, and George Prattleton too. Hunt," he added, aloud, "you will lend me the key again for five minutes."

"No, sir," raved out the old clerk, "and I hope you'll be flogged for having took it in defiance, though you be a senior, and a'most six foot high."

He pushed Lewis out at the door as he spoke, fearing another act of defiance, and closed it.

Lewis stood in irresolution; his terror for the fate of Henry Arkell was strong upon him. He flew after George Prattleton.

"Will you do me a favour?" he panted, completely out of breath in his haste and agitation. "I want to get into the church, and Hunt has turned obstinate about the key. Will you get it from him for me?"

Mr. Prattleton stopped and gazed at him. "You cannot want anything in the church, Lewis. What are you up to?"

"Do get the key for me," he entreated, unable to help betraying his emotion. "I must go in; I *must*, Mr. Prattleton. It may be a matter of life or death."

"You are ill, Lewis; you are agitated. What is all this?"

"I am not ill. I only want to get into the church."

"For what purpose?"

"It's a little private matter of my own."

"You can tell me what it is."

"No, I cannot do that."

"Then I cannot help you."

Lewis was pushed to his wits' end. George Prattleton was walking on, but turned again and waited. He was not free from some inward wonder and agitation himself, remembering his own adventure of the past night.

"If I trust a secret to you, will you promise, on your honour, not to tell it again?" asked Lewis. "It's nothing much; only a lark, concerning one of us college boys."

"Oh, I'll promise," readily answered George Prattleton, who was rarely troubled with scruples of any sort, and used to be fond of "larks" himself; rather too much so.

"Well, then, I locked Harry Arkell in the church last night, and I want to go and see after him, for fear he should be dead of fright, or something of that, you know."

"In there all night? in the church all night?" stammered George Prattleton, as if he could not take in the meaning of the words.

"He went in to practise after school yesterday evening, and I turned the key upon him, and took it back to old Hunt's, and he has been in there ever since, fastened up with the ghosts. I did it only for a lark, you know."

George Prattleton's arms dropped powerless by his side, and his face turned of some livid colour

between white and green. Would the previous night's exploit—*his* exploit—come out to the world through this miserable fellow's ill-timed "joke?" But all they could do now was to see after Henry Arkell.

They went back to the clerk's, and George Prattleton took the key from the hook.

"Something has been dropped in the church, Hunt," he carelessly said; "I'll go myself with Lewis, and see that he meddles with nothing."

"Something dropped in the church?" repeated the old man; "then, I suppose, that was what the other college gent has been after; though he didn't say nothing of it. He was here afore I had opened our shutters."

"Which of them was that?" asked George Prattleton, pausing, with the key in his hand.

"It were Mr. Arkell, sir; him what goes in to practise on the organ. He were in yesterday practising, and he flung the key back when he'd done, and broke our cat's chaney saucer, and then made off. I've been a showing him the mischief he went and done."

"Was that Mr. Arkell, do you say? Has Arkell been here this morning?"

"Why, it ain't two minutes since, sir. He cut up that way as if he was going straight home."

And as the man spoke, there flashed into George

Prattleton's mind the little episode that had so startled him and his friend Rolls in the night—the finding of the church door open, when they had surely locked it. It must have been then that Henry Arkell got out of the church. How much had he witnessed of the scene in the vestry? had he recognised him, George Prattleton?

George Prattleton exchanged a look with Lewis, and hung the key up again, making some vague remark to the clerk, that Mr. Arkell had probably found what they were about to look for, if he had been to practise so recently as yesterday evening. Shutting the door behind him, he walked away with Lewis, whose senses were in a state of hopeless perplexity.

"He has got out, you hear, Lewis."

"But how could he get out?" returned Lewis. "He's not a fairy, to get through the keyhole, and he couldn't have got down from the windows! It's an impossibility."

"These apparent 'impossibilities' turn out sometimes to have been the most straightforward trifles in the world," observed George Prattleton, carelessly. "How do we know but old Hunt may have gone into the church himself last evening, to dust it, or what not? It is——"

"But then, Arkell would have come home," debated the perplexed Lewis, who truly thought

some incomprehensible magic must have been at work.

"Well, Lewis, I don't think it much signifies how he got out, provided he is out; and were I you, I should not inquire too closely into particulars. You had better keep as quiet as you can in the matter; that's my advice to you; Mr. Wilberforce might not be disposed to treat your exploit as a 'joke,' should it come to his ears."

"But nobody knows it was me," said Lewis, eagerly.

"Just so: therefore your policy should be to keep still. As you please, though, of course."

"You won't tell of me, Mr. Prattleton?"

"Not I, faith! It's no affair of mine; but I'd not recommend you to attempt it again, Lewis. Good morning; I'm going into the town."

So early had they been abroad, and all this taken place, that it was not yet very much past seven, and when Henry Arkell reached the master's house, some of the boys were only going out of it for morning school. The hour for assembling was seven, but in the winter season some irregularity in arriving was winked at, for the best of all possible reasons, that the masters were late themselves; and it was often half past before the senior boy called over the roll. Henry went upstairs to give his face a wash; the man-servant saw him going up, but

supposed he had only returned for something he might have forgotten. Neither of the Lewises was in the room, and he found his own bed tumbled as if he had slept in it. This of course had been Lewis's care; but Henry wondered at it. If Lewis had done it out of good nature, that his absence should not be observed, he must have changed greatly. It must be remembered that he knew nothing of Lewis's having locked him in the church; he supposed that must have been George Prattleton; but what he had seen tied his tongue from inquiring.

Jocelyn had done calling the roll when Henry got to the college hall. It was so unusual a thing for him to be marked late, that Jocelyn heaved his eyebrows in a sort of lazy surprise. Presently Jocelyn asked him in an undertone where he had been the previous evening.

"You missed me, then?" said Henry.

"Missed you!—we couldn't help missing you; you had not got back at bed-time. I suppose you were at the deanery—and got home at eleven? It's fine to be you! How's Miss Beauclerc?"

"As well as usual," replied Henry, with a nod and a laugh, to keep up the deception. Jocelyn's assumed idea was the most convenient one that could have been taken up.

Henry threw his eyes round the school in search

of the Lewises. Surely *they* must know of his night's absence. The elder one he could not see; but the younger was at his desk with a red and sullen face, the effects of the private beating. He sat down to his lessons, with what courage he had, after his vigil; and presently, happening to look up, he saw Lewis senior.

Lewis senior was stealthily regarding him over the corner of a desk, with as much inward curiosity as though he had risen from the dead. Lewis was in a perplexed state of mystification yet. There Arkell was, sure enough; alive, and apparently well. He had not become an idiot; that, Lewis could see; he had not parted with his arms and legs. How *had* he got out? But the relief, to find him thus, was so great to Lewis's mind, that his spirits rose to a reckless height; and he was insolent to Jocelyn when the latter spoke to him about coming in after the roll was called.

At breakfast time Henry went in search of George Prattleton, but could not see him; the probability was that Mr. George had gone to bed again, and was taking out his night's rest by daylight. He sought him again at dinner-time, and then he had gone out; the two Prattleton boys thought to the billiard rooms. In the afternoon, however, as Henry was passing through the cloisters to the school, after service in the cathedral, he met him.

George Prattleton listened with an air of apparent incredulity to the tale; Henry had got locked up in the church, and seen him and a stranger go into the church at midnight, or thereabouts!—*him*, George Prattleton! Mr. George denied it *in toto;* and expressed his belief that Henry must have been dreaming.

"It's of no use talking like that, George Prattleton," said Henry, in a vexed tone. "You know quite well you were there. I saw the same man with you in the Grounds, the previous night, when I was going home after the audit-dinner."

"You must have seen double, then! I don't know whom you are talking of. Had you been drinking?"

"It won't do, George Prattleton. I was in full possession of both my sight and senses. You know whom I mean. His name's Rolls."

"Did he tell you his name?"

"No; but you did. I heard you call him by his name two or three times in the church last night. I want to know what I am to do about it."

"I don't know any Rolls; and I was not in the church last night; and my full persuasion is—if you really were locked in, as you say—that you fell asleep and dreamt this story."

"Now look you here, George Prattleton; if you

persist in this line of denial, I shall be obliged to tell Mr. Wilberforce. I don't like to do it; your family and mine are intimate, and we have received many kindnesses from them, and I assure you I'd almost rather cut my tongue out than speak. But I can't let things go on at this uncertainty. Do you know what that Rolls did?"

"What did he do?" was the mocking rejoinder.

"He cut a leaf out of the register book."

"No?" shouted George Prattleton, the words scaring him to seriousness.

"I declare he did. When the candle went out, you thought it went out of itself, didn't you; well, he blew it out. I saw him blow it, and he called out, 'What a beast of a candle,' and said it was the damp put it out, and he got you to go for the matches. Was it not so?"

"Well?" said George Prattleton, too much alarmed to heed the half admission.

"Well, you had no sooner gone than he somehow got the candle alight again; I didn't see how, I suppose he had matches; and he took out a penknife, and put what looked like a thin board behind the leaf he was looking at, and cut it out. I say I'm not sure! but it's transportation for life to rob a church register."

George Prattleton wound his arm round one of the cloister pillars: face, heart, senses, alike scared.

To give him his due, he would no more have countenanced a thing like this than he would have committed murder. All denial to Henry was over; and he felt half dead as he glanced forward to future consequences, and their effect upon his own reputation.

"You saw all this! Why on earth did you not pounce in upon him? or help me when I got back with the matches?"

"Because I was bewildered—frightened, if you will; and it all passed so quickly. I knew afterwards that it was what I ought to have done; but one can't do always the right thing at the right time."

"He put the leaf in his pocket, you say? It may not be destroyed. I———"

"Do you know what it related to?" interrupted Henry.

"Yes; to some old tithe cause—a dispute in a family he knows; people of the name of Whiffam," answered George Prattleton. "Some trifling cause, he said."

"Well, it's an awfully dangerous thing to do, let it relate to ever so trifling a cause," observed Henry. "Who is this Rolls? Do you know him well?"

"Three days back I did not know him from Adam," was the candid admission. "We met at

the billiard rooms; and, somehow, we got thick directly. That night, when you saw us in the grounds, he was sounding me on this very thing—whether I could not get him a sight of the register."

"What's to be done about it?" asked Henry.

"*I* don't know," returned George Prattleton, flinging up his hands.

"It ought to be told to Mr. Wilberforce!"

"Be still, for heaven's sake! Would you ruin me? You must give me your promise, Henry Arkell, not to betray this; now, before we part."

"I don't wish to betray it; I'd do anything rather than bring trouble upon you. But it *ought* to be told."

"Nobody living may be the worse for what Rolls has done; nobody may ever hear of it more. Of course I shall charge him with his duplicity, and get the leaf back from him, if it is not destroyed, and replace it in the book. In that case, nobody can be the worse. Give me your promise."

Henry did not see what else he could do. If the leaf could be got back, and replaced, to speak of the abstraction might be productive of needless, gratuitous harm to George Prattleton. He put his hand into George's.

"You have my promise," he said; "but on one

condition. I will never speak of this, so long as I am unaware of any urgent necessity existing for its disclosure. But should that necessity come, then I shall ask you to release me from my promise; and if you decline, *I* shall consider myself no longer bound by it."

"Very well; a bargain," said George Prattleton, after a pause. "And now I'm after that scoundrel Rolls. I'll tell *you* a secret before I go —tit for tat. Do you know how you got fastened in the church?"

"I suppose you did it, not knowing I was there."

"Not I. It was Lewis."

"Lewis!"

"Lewis senior. For a lark, he said, but I expect he owed you some grudge. By the way, though, I promised him I'd not speak of this; he told it me in confidence. I forgot that."

"I'll not speak of it. I can't, if I am to keep the other a secret. It was only the difficulty of accounting for my getting out of the church, that kept me from asking Hunt how I got locked in."

They parted. Mr. George Prattleton went in search of his friend Rolls, and Henry tore along the cloisters with all his might, anticipating he knew not what of reprimand from the head master

for lingering on his way from college. It was close upon four o'clock, and his desk had some Greek to do yet; but the afternoon lessons were less regularly performed in winter than in summer.

CHAPTER XVII.

A SHADOW OF THE FUTURE.

On the second of December, Peter Arkell and his family came home, looking blooming. Eva Prattleton, who had stayed with them all the time, was blooming; as was Lucy; as was, for her, Mrs. Arkell. Even Peter himself looked quite a different man from the one who had gone away in July. Ah, my friends, there's nothing like running away from home to restore health and looks, *if you can only leave care behind.*

Quite a small crowd had assembled to meet them at the station. Nearly all the Prattleton family, including Mr. George, who was dreadfully in want just now of some distraction for his long hours. The two young Prattletons and Henry Arkell had rushed up, books in hand, just as they came out of school; and Travice Arkell, he was there. Handsome Travice! the best-looking young man in Westerbury when Frederick St. John was out of it.

"How have *you* been, Lucy?" he whispered,

quietly coming near her, when he had done greeting the rest.

She shyly looked up at him as he took her hand. Scarcely a word was spoken. His head was bent for a moment over her blushing cheeks, and Travice looked as if he would very much have liked to take a kiss from the red ripe lips. It was impossible there; perhaps impossible elsewhere. Peter came up.

"Travice, I wish you'd see to the luggage, and that; and put my wife in a fly. There's enough of you here without me. I shall walk quietly on."

Just the same shy, awkward, incapable Peter Arkell as of yore. In usefulness his daughter Lucy was worth ten of him. He slipped out of the station by the least-frequented way, and walked on towards home. As he was going along, he met Kenneth, Mr. Fauntleroy's confidential clerk; and the latter stopped.

"I'm glad I met you," said Kenneth; "it will save me a journey to your house to-day, for we heard you'd be at home. How is it you have never sent us any money, Mr. Arkell?"

"Because I couldn't send it," returned Peter. "I wrote to Mr. Fauntleroy, telling him how impossible it was. I suppose he has managed it. He could if he liked, you know; it all lies in his hands."

"Ah, but he couldn't," answered Kenneth. "He had been too easy in one or two matters (I don't allude to your affairs), and had got involved in a good deal of expense through it; and the consequence is, he has been obliged to adopt a stricter policy in general."

"Mr. Fauntleroy knows how I was situated. In a strange place, you have to pay for everything as it comes in. I got a little teaching down there, and that helped; but it was not much."

"Well, Mr. Fauntleroy thought you ought to have sent him some money," persisted Kenneth. "And I'm not sure but he would have enforced it, had he not got it elsewhere."

"Got it elsewhere! On my account? What do you mean, Kenneth?"

"Mr. Arkell gave him ten pounds."

"Mr. Arkell gave him ten pounds!" almost shouted Peter. "How did that come about? Who said anything to Mr. Arkell?"

"I believe Mr. Fauntleroy happened to mention it accidentally. Or whether it was that he asked him for your exact address at the place, and said he was going to worry you for money, I'm not sure. I know Mr. Arkell said, better let you be quiet while you were there, and advanced the ten pounds."

"Mr. Fauntleroy had no right to speak to my cousin about it at all, Mr. Kenneth. I regard it as

a breach of good faith. I wrote and asked Mr. Fauntleroy to wait, and he might have done so. As to the address, he knew that, for I gave it him."

"I'm in a hurry," said Mr. Kenneth. "I thought I'd speak to you, because I know Mr. Fauntleroy intended to send to you as soon as you came home. Here's another instalment due, now December's come in."

He went on his way. Peter Arkell looked after him for a minute, and then went on his. "Home to care! home to care!" he murmured with a sigh of pain.

Over and over again had Peter Arkell—not cursed, he was too good a man for that—but repented the day that placed him in the power of Mr. Fauntleroy. Some years previous to this, in a moment of great embarrassment, Peter Arkell had gone to Mr. Fauntleroy with his tale of woes. "Won't you help me?" he asked; "I once helped you." And Mr. Fauntleroy, entirely indifferent to his fellow-creature's woes though he was at heart, had not the face to refuse, with the recollection of that past obligation upon him. He helped him in this way. He advanced Peter Arkell two or three hundred pounds at a heavy rate of interest. It was not his own money, he said—he really had none to spare—it was the money of a client who had left it in his hands to make some

profitable use of. Of course Peter Arkell understood it: at least he believed he did—that the money was Mr. Fauntleroy's own, and the plea of the client only put forth that the interest might be exacted—and his simple, honourable nature blushed for Mr. Fauntleroy. But he accepted it—he was too much in need of the assistance not to do it—and as the months and years went on he found himself unable to pay the interest. Things went on with some discomfort for a long time, and then Mr. Fauntleroy insisted on what he called some final arrangement being come to—that is, he said his client insisted upon it. The result was that Peter Arkell undertook to pay ten pounds every three months off the debt, interest, and costs, without the smallest notion how he could accomplish it. He had some learned book coming out, and if that turned up a trump card, he might be able to do it and more. But, when the book did come out it did not turn out a trump. The first ten pounds was due on the first of June last, and Peter had managed to pay it. The second ten was due on the first of September, and he wrote to Mr. Fauntleroy for grace. He now heard it had been paid by his cousin William Arkell. The third ten had been due the previous day, for this was the second of December. He would be able to pay this, for he had some money coming to him yet from the people

who had rented his house, and, so far, *that* would be got rid of.

Peter might have paid it in another way. The first thing he saw on entering his home was a letter from his sister Mildred, and on opening it he found it contained a ten-pound note. These windfalls would come from Mildred now and then; and without them Peter had not an idea how he should have got along.

But not to his necessities did he appropriate this. The most prominent feeling swaying him then, was vexation that William Arkell should have been troubled about the matter—William, who had ever been so good to him—who had helped him out of more difficulties than the world knew of. In the impulse of the moment, without stopping to sit down, he went out again, carrying the note. He could not remember the day when he had been able to pay anything to his cousin, but at least he could do this.

Things were not prospering with the city, or with William Arkell. That the trade was going gradually down to ruin, to all but total extermination, he felt sure of now; and he bitterly regretted that Travice had cast in his lot with it. He had designed to send Travice to Oxford, to cause him to embrace one of the learned professions; but Travice had elected to follow his father,

and Mr. Arkell had yielded—all just as it had been with himself in his own youth. None, save William Arkell himself, knew the care that was upon him, or how his property was dwindling down. Ever and anon there would come flashing a gleam of improvement in the trade, and rather large orders would come in, whispering hope for the future; but the orders and the hope soon faded again.

Peter entered the iron gates, and was turning to the left to the manufactory, when he saw Mr. Arkell at the dining-room window; so he went across to the house.

"No need to look for me abroad to-day, Peter," said his cousin, opening the dining-room door and meeting him in the hall. "I am not well enough to go out."

"What's the matter?" asked Peter.

"I don't know; I have had shivering fits all the morning—can do nothing but sit over this hot fire. Charlotte thinks it must be some sort of illness coming on; but I suppose it's only a cold. So you have got back at last?"

"Now, just," answered Peter, sitting down on the other side of the fire; "Travice said nothing about your illness; he was at the station."

"Was he? I did not know he had gone out. Oh, he thinks it's nothing, I dare say; I hope it will be nothing. What's this?"

Peter had handed him the ten-pound note. "It is what you paid to Mr. Fauntleroy while I was away; and bitterly vexed I am, to think he should have applied to you. I met Kenneth in leaving the station, and heard of it from him. But, William, I want to know why you paid it. Did Fauntleroy hold out any threats to you?"

"Something to that effect. He spoke of putting an execution into your house: it would not have done at all, you know, while strangers were in it. I never knew that he had got judgment."

"Oh yes, he did," said Peter, bitterly; "he took care of that. I am at his mercy any day, both in goods and person. He forgets, William, the service I rendered him, and my having to pay it: it is nothing but that that has kept me down in life. Put an execution in my house! I wonder where he expects to go to? Not to heaven, I should think?"

"He said his client pressed for the money—would not, in fact, wait."

"I dare say he did; it's just like him to say it. His client is himself."

"No?" exclaimed William Arkell, lifting his head.

"I firmly believe it to be so. He is pressing for another ten pounds now; it was due yesterday."

"Have you got it for him? If not, why do you give me this?"

"I have got it," said Peter; "I have to receive money to-day. Thank you a thousand times, William, for this and all else. How is business?"

"Don't ask. I feel too ill to fret over it just now. I'd give it up to-morrow but for Travice."

Certain words all but escaped Peter Arkell's lips, but they were suppressed again. He wondered—he had wondered long—*why* William Arkell continued to live at an expensive rate. That it was his wife's doings, not his, Peter knew; but he could not help thinking that, had he been a firm, clever man, as William was, he should not have yielded to her.

He met her in the hall as he went out. She wore a rich, trailing silk, and bracelets of gold. Peter stopped to shake hands with her; but she was never too civil to him, or to his daughter Lucy. In point of fact, Lucy had for some time haunted Mrs. Arkell's dreams in a very unpleasant manner, entailing a frequent nightmare, hideous to contemplate.

"What did Peter Arkell want here?" she asked of her husband, before she was well in the room; and her tone was by no means a gracious one.

"Not much," carelessly answered Mr. Arkell, who had drawn over the fire in another fit of shivering.

She took her seat in the chair Peter had vacated,

and slightly lifted her rich dress, lest the scorching fire should mar its beauty.

"I suppose he came to borrow money," she said, no pleasant look upon her countenance.

"On the contrary, he came to pay me some."

"To pay you some! What for?"

"To repay me some, I should have said. I paid something for him during his absence—ten pounds—and he has now returned it."

For one single moment she felt inclined to doubt the words, and to say so. The next, she remembered how simply truthful was her husband.

"I want Travice," she said, presently. "I sent to the manufactory for him, but he was out. Will he be long, do you know?"

"I dare say not. Peter told me he was at the railway station. He went, I suppose, to meet them."

Mrs. Arkell lifted her head with a sort of start.

"Did you know he had gone?" she asked, sharply.

"I knew nothing at all of it. What are you so cross about?"

Mrs. Arkell bit her lips—her habit when put out.

"I have always objected to Travice's excessive intimacy with the Peter Arkells," she slowly said. "You know I have. But I might just as well have objected to the wind's blowing, for all the

effect it has had. I hope it will not prove that I had cause."

"Cause! What cause? What do you mean, Charlotte?"

"Well, I think they are a mean, deceitful set. I think they are scheming to entrap Travice into an engagement with Lucy Arkell."

Ill as Mr. Arkell felt, he yet burst into a laugh. The notion of Peter's scheming to entrap anyone, or anything, was so ludicrous: simple, single-minded Peter, who had probably never given a thought to Lucy's marrying at all since she was in existence! and his wife was utterly above meanness of any sort—the very soul of openness and honour.

"Where did you pick up that notion?" he asked, when his laugh was over.

"I picked it up from observation and common sense," answered Mrs. Arkell, resentful of the laugh. "Travice used always to be there; and now that they are back, I suppose he will be again. He has lost no time in beginning, it seems."

"And if he is there, it does not follow that he goes for the sake of Lucy."

"It looks wonderfully like it, though."

"Nonsense, Charlotte! In the old days, when I was a young man, as Travice is, and Mildred was a girl like Lucy, quite as attractive——"

"Quite as what?" shrieked Mrs. Arkell. "I hope your taste does not put forward Lucy Arkell as attractive—or as Mildred's having been so before her. They are as like as two peas. A couple of uneducated, old-fashioned, old-maidish things, possessing not a single attraction."

"Opinions differ," said Mr. Arkell, quietly. "But if it be as you intimate, there's the less danger for Travice. What I was about to say was this—that in the old days I was in the habit of going to that house more than Travice goes to it now, and busy people, even my own mother, never believed but that I went for the sake of Mildred. I did not; neither did I marry her."

"The cases are different. You had no companion at home; Travice has his sisters. And it might have ended in your marrying Mildred, had I not come down on that long visit here, and saved you."

"Yes, it might." He was looking dreamily into the fire, his thoughts buried in the past; utterly oblivious to the present, and to the effect his remark might make. Mrs. Arkell felt particularly savage when she heard it.

"And a nice wife you'd have had! She is only fit for what she is—a lady's maid. Lucy will follow her example, perhaps, when old Peter's poverty has sent him into the grave. I always hated Lucy

Arkell—it may be a strong term to use—but it's the truth. From the time that she was only as high as the elbow of that chair, and her mother, with the fine Cheveley notions, used to deck her out as a little court doll, I hated her!"

"And I have always thought her one of the sweetest and most loveable of children," quietly returned Mr. Arkell. "Opinions differ, I say, Charlotte. But why should you have hated her?"

"Because—I think it must have been" (and Mrs. Arkell looked into the fire also in reflection, and for once spoke her true sentiments)—"I think it must have been because you and Travice made so much of her. I only know it has been."

"I'd not cherish it, Charlotte."

"*You* would not, I know. Tell me," she added, with quite a gust of passion in voice and eye, "would you like to see your fine, attractive, noble son, thrown away upon Lucy Arkell?"

"My head is as bad as it can be, Charlotte; I wish you'd not worry me. I think I must be going to have some fever."

"He might marry half Westerbury. With his good looks, his education, his fine prospects——"

"Yes, do put in *them*," interrupted Mr. Arkell. "Very fine they are, in the present aspect of affairs."

"Affairs will get good again. I don't believe the

half that's said about the badness of trade. *You* have made a good thing of it," she added significantly.

"Pretty well; I and my father before me. But those times have gone by for ever."

"I don't believe it; I believe the trade will revive again and be as lucrative as before; and Travice will be able to maintain a home such as we have maintained. It *is* a fine prospect, I don't cear how you may deny it in your gloom; and I say that Travice, enjoying it, might marry half the desirable girls in Westerbury."

"He'd be taken up for bigamy if he did."

"Can't you be serious?" she angrily asked. "Whereas, if he got enthralled by that bane, Lucy Arkell, and—— Good patience, here she is!" broke off Mrs. Arkell, as her eyes fell on the courtyard. "The impudence of that! Not half an hour in the town, and to come here!"

Lucy, in her grey travelling cloak, and fresh straw bonnet, came staggering in under a load: a flower-pot, with a great plant in bloom. She looked well. In moments of excitement, there was something of her mother's loveliness in her face; in the lustre of the soft and sweet dark eyes, in the rose bloom of the delicate cheeks, and at those times she was less like Mildred. Lucy put her load on the table, and turned to offer her hand to

Mrs. Arkell. Mrs. Arkell touched the tips of the fingers, but Mr. Arkell took her in his arms and kissed her twice; and then recollected himself and fell into proper repentance.

"I ought not to have done it, Lucy; I forgot myself. But, my dear, in the joy of seeing you, and seeing you so pretty, I quite lost sight of precaution. I am shivering with cold and illness, Lucy, and may be going to have I don't know what."

Lucy laughed. She was not afraid, and said so.

"Mamma made me bring this down at once for your conservatory," she said, addressing Mrs. Arkell. "It is a wax plant, and a very beautiful one. The last time we were here, you were regretting you had not a nice one, and when mamma saw this, she thought of you. She sends her very kind regards, Mrs. Arkell, and hopes you will accept it. And now that's my message, and there's my load, and I have delivered both," concluded Lucy, merrily.

In the face of the present—and it was really a beautiful one of its nature—Mrs. Arkell could not maintain her utter ungraciousness. She unbent a very little: unwillingly thanked Lucy for the plant, and inquired how Mrs. Peter Arkell was.

"I think we had better send our girls to the seaside, if they could come back improved as Lucy

has," remarked Mr. Arkell; and the remark aggravated his wife. "Are those roses on your cheeks real, Lucy, or have you learnt the use of that fashionable cosmetic, rose-powder?"

"They are quite real," answered Lucy, the cheeks blushing their own testimony to the answer. "It has done us all so much good! Mr. Prattleton said he should not have known mamma, had he met her in a strange place, she is looking so different. But I am warm just now. It was coming through the streets with that: everybody stared at me."

"Could not Travice have brought it?" asked Mr. Arkell.

"He did offer; but mamma said I should bring it more carefully than he, and she sent me off with it at once. She had been taking care of it herself all the way."

"Where is Travice?" inquired Mrs. Arkell, the sharp tone perceptible in her voice again, more especially to Mr. Arkell's ears.

"He was helping mamma indoors when I came. Papa had gone somewhere: he left us at the station."

Mr. Arkell did not say that he had been there. He was looking very poorly just then, and his hands, quite trembling with cold, were blue as he stretched them out to the fire. Lucy, an admirable

sick nurse from her training, the being with her ailing mother, threw back her grey cloak, knelt down, and took them into her own warm hands to chafe them.

It was what one of Mr. Arkell's own daughters would not, or could not, have done. He looked down on the pretty upturned face, every line of which spoke of a sweet goodness. She was more lovely, more attractive than Mildred had been—or was it that his eyes had then had a film before them?—and he felt that—were he in Travice's place——

"I wonder you liked to stay so long away, leaving Henry to himself!" interrupted Mrs. Arkell.

"He was at Mr. Wilberforce's, you know," replied Lucy. "He was very well there; very happy."

"I suppose he comes home to-day."

"No, not until the college school breaks up for Christmas. Mr. Wilberforce thinks he had better not disturb himself before. Have you heard of the gold medal? But of course you have. I hope I shall not grow too proud of my brother. But oh, Mrs. Arkell! pray tell me! What do you think of that dreadful thing, the loss of Mr. Dundyke? Will he ever come back again?"

"Ever come back again!" repeated Mrs. Arkell, believing that Lucy was putting on an affectation

of childishness. "How can a murdered man come back?"

"Was he murdered? I thought they supposed he was drowned, but were not certain what it was. Was he murdered?" she repeated, looking at Mr. Arkell, for Mrs. Arkell did not appear inclined to answer her.

"I fear he was, Lucy."

"Oh, what a dreadful thing! Mrs. Arkell, what will Mrs. Dundyke do?"

"Oh, she has enough to live upon, I believe."

"I did not quite mean it in that light," said Lucy, gently, as Mrs. Arkell's remark jarred upon her ear. "And old Marmaduke Carr has died," she resumed, "and there's going to be a law-suit about the property. What a great many things seem to have happened since we went away! Mr. Arkell, which side do you think has the most right to gain the law-suit?"

"The most right? Well, there's a great deal to be said on both sides, Lucy. If there was no marriage, of course the property does belong to the Carrs of Eckford; if there was a marriage, they have no right to it whatever. In any case, the blame lies with Robert Carr; and his descendants suffer."

"Do you think there was a marriage?" continued Lucy.

Mr. Arkell shook his head.

"I don't, my dear, now. Had there been one, some traces of it would have been found ere this."

"Then young Mrs. Carr will lose the law-suit!"

"Undoubtedly. It appears very strange to me that Fauntleroy should go on with it."

The hands were warm now, and Lucy rose.

"You have done me good, Lucy," said Mr. Arkell, as she was putting on her gloves to leave; "good in all ways. A bright face and a cheering manner! my dear, in sickness, they are worth their weight in gold."

Making the best of her way home, she found Travice alone. Henry was upstairs with his mother, uncording boxes.

"What a time you have been, Lucy!" was the salutation; for it had seemed very long to him.

"Have I? I did not once sit down. Mr. Arkell says I look well after my sojourn, but I told him he should see mamma."

"So he should. But I must be going, Lucy. *Do* you look well?"

He took both her hands in his, and stood before her, his face a little bent, regarding her intently. Lucy blushed violently under the gaze. Suddenly, without any warning, his lips were on hers; and he took the first kiss that he had taken from Lucy since her childhood.

"Don't be angry with me, Lucy! Think it a cousin's kiss, if you will."

As he went out, the large shadow of a large, gaily-dressed woman, passing between him and the setting sun, was cast upon Travice Arkell. The shadow of Barbara Fauntleroy. If he could but have foreseen the type it was of the terrible shadow that was to fall upon him in the future!

END OF VOL. II.

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